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Carlos D., Paul Banks, Daniel Kessler, Sam Fogarino of Interpol, photographed by Pieter M. van Hatten in New York City. Grooming by Andie Markoe-Byrne, using Kleh's. Styling by Daniela Jung. From left: blazer, button-down shirt, and pants by Craig Robinson, red blazer by Moschino; button-down shirt and tie by Helmut Lang; suit and button-down shirt by Agnes B.; tie by Helmut Lang; striped button-down shirt by Ben Sherman.

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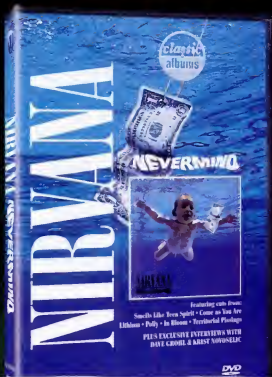


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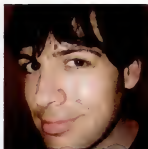
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### BRIAN RAFTERY

WRITER, "NIGHT FALLS ON  
MANHATTAN," page 62

**F--- THA INTERPOL** "I was surprised by how much Paul Banks knew about rap. N.W.A. came on the jukebox, and he knew every word."

**OTHER ANTICS** Raftery, who also profiled rebel rockers Living Things in this issue, has written for GQ and Entertainment Weekly.



### PIETER M. VAN HATTEM

PHOTOGRAPHER, "NIGHT FALLS ON  
MANHATTAN," page 62

**BLACK COMEDY** "Interpol get branded as depressing and morose, but the guys are really hilarious and share quite a few inside jokes."

**THE HOLE TRUTH** "I'm absolute crap, but I golf whenever I can, especially during Christmas, when I'm in Arizona."



### STRAWBERRY SAROYAN

WRITER, "MASTERSON OF THE  
UNIVERSE," page 47

**FUZZY WAS HE?** "Right before he left, Danny Masterson was trying to butter me up and told me, 'Think of Care Bears when you write about me.'"

**IN DA PUB** Saroyan's book, *Girl Walks Into a Bar: A Memoir*, is out now.



### ANDREW BEAUJON

WRITER, "THE ROYAL FAMILY,"  
page 86

**HOUSE OF FOLLOWILL** "The Kings of Leon's pants were some of the skinniest I've ever seen. I think their mom custom makes them."

**HIGHER GROUND** Beaujon's book about Christian rock, *Body Piercing Saved My Life*, will be out next year.



### MICHAEL LAVINE

PHOTOGRAPHER, "REBELS WITHOUT  
APPLAUSE," page 90

**HOT SHOTS** "Playing quarters with Living Things was fun, and they were pretty good at it, even though they'd never heard of it before."

**THE CHEMICAL SISTERS** When not taking photos, Lavine plays with chemistry sets and his two daughters.

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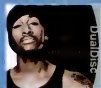


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# editor's letter



Scenes from the cover shoot: Interpol actually laugh (left); their friends as "extras"



## Nothing breaks up the monotony

of music-magazine serfdom like a random visit from a rock star. Most often, the guest is either a brand-new band desperately trying to stir up media attention (like when Hanson harmonized "Mmmmbop" while shaking tambourines) or an older artist desperately trying to make a comeback (like when Sebastian Bach partied in leather pants so tight that female editors threatened to hide in the supply closet). Sometimes even A-listers stop by, like when Snoop Dogg got a teenage intern high on second-hand blunt smoke, then ordered senior writer Marc Spitz to fetch him Pizza Hut like his little bitch.

We still can't figure out why 50 Cent felt the need to play us his new album, *The Massacre*, in person. But we certainly weren't going to turn him away, especially when he arrived in a bulletproof SUV, flanked by four presumably armed bodyguards. I expected a surly, taciturn thug; in pictures, even Fiddy's abs look menacing. Instead, he was so gregarious and

charismatic that he actually seemed to glow. Or maybe that was just his million-dollar diamond chain, which could cover the entire staff's salary for 20 years.

"All right, I'm going to stay here till y'all get sick of me," he said, commandeering my office stereo. Before each song he'd tell a little story, and we'd do what any sane person would do when entertained by a man with a bullet hole in his cheek. Laugh. *Hard*. So the four presumably armed bodyguards can see. Actually, we didn't have to fake it. 50 was not only hilarious, but he also advised us on family, career, and sex. Here's a sample:

- Do not play a track with lyrics like "Bitch, get in my car!" for your beloved grandma, as she will invariably say, "Baby, you scare me!" Instead, write a song praising God and she will love you like she did before you started selling crack.
- If you're having trouble negotiating with Dr. Dre, hang up on him, then don't answer his calls or text messages. By the fourth day, you'll get exactly what you want. (Note: This only works if your Dre-produced debut sold 11 million copies.)
- If you are bespectacled senior associate editor Dave Itzkoff, and you want to get down



"No, we don't want a lollipop": 50 with Spin.com's Adrienne Day and editor-in-chief Sia Michel



Art director Devin Pedzwatzer claims Fiddy called him "smooth"

with a hot *mami*, blast 50's single "Candy Shop" after you take a shower. Dance around in your towel and say, "50 Cent told me to play this for you, baby!"

For more Fiddy, turn to Chuck Klosterman's interview on page 76. Interpol may be comparatively ice-deficient, but they appreciate the value of a well-tailored suit. Besides making excellent gloom rock, the band has injected shempy, spindly-armed indie rock with dark glamour. They've worked incredibly hard to make the leap, in just over a year, from small clubs to venues like the legendary Radio City Music Hall in New York. They've worked even harder at the *Interpol Lifestyle*, as Brian Raftery discovered during a grueling week reporting his first *Spin* cover story. "I've reached the apex of this whole party reputation," contests bassist Carlos D. "I don't need to be that guy anymore."

50 Cent would approve. As he sagely warned:

- If you are famous, stay home, because when shit goes down, everybody's going to blame you instead of the real perpetrators. If you want to party, just build a club in your own damn mansion!

SIA MICHEL, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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# feedback

## GOOD NEWS FOR PEOPLE WHO LIKE YEAR-END ISSUES

I'm generally not a fan of year-end issues, but *Spin* did a bang-up job. The January issue wasn't just lists and best of 2004 crap—the articles on indie rock ("Trend of the Year") and documentary films ("Film Trend of the Year"), and the dynamite interviews with Frank Black and Isaac Brock, nailed the year in music.

Brynna Pietz  
St. Louis

I am thankful that the year of crunk and William Hung has come to an end. In a year littered with accusations of flip-flopping, I want to thank your kick-ass magazine for appreciating the finer things in life. "The Year in Music" was an awesome rehash of this year's best. Thank you for giving the Libertines, Morrissey, and Interpol the credit they deserve and for making 2004 a delightful year for music lovers everywhere. The rest of the population can keep on singing that damn JoJo song, but I've got some Franz Ferdinand to groove to.

Jane Collins  
London, Ontario, Canada

Having been an avid reader of *Spin* for almost two years now, I am continually impressed by the magazine. However, the January issue is the best by far. As a die-hard Modest Mouse fan, I'm sure I speak for many when I say how elated I am that they're finally getting the credit they deserve—although it's a little upsetting to see everyone jumping on the bandwagon only now. Isaac Brock is a modern-day genius, and you guys are geniuses for recognizing them as "Band of the Year." Indie rock is finally getting the credit it deserves thanks to your magazine!

Amber Blondin  
Seattle

## RANK AND BILE

Good list of "40 Best Albums of the Year" [January]. Of course, such a list is limited and always finds a way to omit everybody's



"'The Year in Music' is the single best issue I have gotten in my five years of subscribing to *Spin*. Without your musical influence, I could very well still be listening to the same Hanson album I bought when I was 11." Amanda Hocking Austin, Minnesota

new favorite band. I'm afraid I have to take issue with Snow Patrol's mention because the rightful heirs to Coldplay's Britpop ice castle are Sussex-based Keane. And they did it without guitars! They won't give you a dope beat to step to, but their soaring choruses will carry you so high you won't have any use for feet.

Jeremy Edwards  
Kent, Washington

I was starting to believe in you, *Spin*. That was until your 40 best albums list baffled me. Yes, you included people I respect, such as Rilo Kiley, Wilco, Björk, U2, Snow Patrol, and Modest Mouse. But this was a year of great albums by great artists, such as Sonic Youth, Badly Drawn Boy, and Sahara Hotnights. Yet they were excluded!

Jordan Woelk  
Wichita, Kansas

Though I was happy to see artists like Ted Leo, Loretta Lynn, and Modest Mouse at the top of your countdown, I was disappointed with the placement of PJ Harvey, Rilo Kiley, and Wilco—all upstaged by mix CDs, showboats, and a band that hasn't had a good album since the one they named after feces!

Beau Cole  
Oxford, Mississippi



## WHAT'S NEW AT SPIN.COM

Here at *Spin*, it's impossible to write up all the artists who deserve the ink. So we've redesigned our website to feature an exciting up-and-coming band every day (okay, except on weekends—we like to sleep once in a while). You can also listen to exclusive tracks from your favorite bands, watch videos, buy concert tickets, and rant and rave with other fans. Other cool new features include breaking news, editors' picks, a staff blog, an enhanced streaming section, exclusive footage of bands performing live in the *Spin* offices, and lots more. SPIN.COM: All the music that rocks. Without the paper outst!



## WITH FRANZ LIKE THESE

Calling Franz Ferdinand the "Best New Band" [January] makes me want to throw my entire record collection in the fire. I'd rather exist in silence than listen to Franz Ferdinand for even two minutes. *Spin* can usually be counted on to cover interesting bands, but you guys must really be scraping the bottom of the '80s-dance-revival barrel. I can think of at least 45 bands that actually do all the things that people give Franz Ferdinand credit for. And where are they? Wallowing in obscurity.

Michelle Kennedy  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

In response to Alex Kapranos' comment regarding the "horrific plague of elitism" among music fans: We so-called elitists don't think we're better than everyone else just because we listen to no-name bands. We are just sick of poser fans listening to music just because it is "in." I'm sorry, but all these conformists should be shunned for their lack of taste.

Christina Kim  
Baltimore, Maryland

## BOASTFUL, DEED WEST

I've West Interview conducted  
best of the Year, January)? I  
that anyone could fit in a  
with his ego.

## FOUR ANGRY PUNKS

The "Jukebox Jury" article [January] was hilarious, but when Billie Joe said that the song "Lean Back" made it easy for white people to dance, I had to speak out. Could you please inform him that white people aren't the only ones who might not know how to move? I'm a black girl who loves punk music partially because I can't dance for beans.

Myra Holloway  
Milwaukee

I just enjoyed a sidesplitting 15 minutes of reading (and rereading) January's "Jukebox Jury" aloud with my roommate. I don't think I've laughed so hard since Ashlee Simpson's acid reflux. Juliette Lewis is hysterical, and Green Day almost made me forget how much I hate Green Day.

Nichole Delansky  
Moreno Valley, California

## YOU MAKE US FEEL LIKE A NATURAL WOMAN

*Spin* is the only music magazine I even bother with anymore. You guys intellectually stimulate me, so what's a girl to do? I get "The Year in Music" issue and I'm psyched. But I was really disappointed to see that you guys forgot Jeff Buckley's *Grace* (Legacy Edition) in the "Ten Best Reissues of 2004." *Spin*, you rock me hard-core, just next time, give me my Jeff Buckley.

Amber Hodge  
Harrison Township, Michigan

## THE MONTH

Occupation: Banker

Music: Bloc Party, the Smiths, Le Tigre, Joanna Newsom

Hates: All-ages shows, cheese slices

January issue verdict: "The article on the revival of indie rock was fantastic. It's amazing to see great bands such as Death Cab for Cutie, Modest Mouse, and the Arcade Fire finally get mainstream press. In the words of the boys in Franz Ferdinand, the issue was fantastisch!"

anna be a Reader of the Month? Yeah, you do!  
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SPIN 7/12/09

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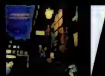
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# noise

4.05

□ News, Gossip, Bands... Your Month in Music Starts Here

□ Backstage Pass By Marc Spitz



Early rehearsal for the 2017 Hall of Fame induction jam



We replaced the photo of Will Ferrell in a catsuit with this tasteful shot of his midriff



"There's nothing funny about tsunamis, so let's talk about us": Gass and Black

## Cowbell to the Rescue

**Tenacious D** (Jack Black and Kyle Gass), **Eddie Vedder**, **Dave Grohl**, **Beck**, and **Queens of the Stone Age** king **Josh Homme** formed a veritable rock super-revue to raise money for victims of the December tsunami. The Music for Relief benefit held January 17 at Los Angeles' Wilshire Theatre collected \$225,000 for the American Red Cross and featured hits (Grohl on the Foo Fighters' "Everlong"), previews (QOTSA's "Long, Slow Goodbye"), and group jams on appropriate covers (Led Zeppelin's "Good Times Bad Times"). **Chris Rock** and **Will Ferrell**, stuffed into a red catsuit, provided comic relief, the latter rocking *more cowbell* in tribute to his portrayal of the late "Gene Frenkle" in the *Saturday Night Live* skit "Blue Oyster Cult: Behind the Music." Beck was faced with the daunting task of performing in front of a crowd that included **Luke Wilson** and **Sacha Baron Cohen** (better known as **Ali G**) just before the self-declared Greatest Band in the World (that is, **Tenacious D**) took the stage. "I was a little worried about that," Beck said. "Will Ferrell gave me a little mojo, even if it involved a red unitard. He looked like an AWOL Cirque du Soleil reject."



"A moment of silence, please, for the victims of the catsuit": Beck

## Confiding on the Metro

**Kelly Osbourne** is not the first twentysomething icon we've interviewed who dismissed her Svengali-ed debut album as mercenary bubblegum jive (that'd be **Mandy Moore**). "My record label thought, 'Oh, she's really cool. She's in *The Osbournes*. We want to sign her and make money off her,'" Kelly tells us with spunky candor, referring to the Ric Wake-produced *Shut Up*. "But the album was crap.... I felt like just another **Lindsay Lohan**, **Ashlee Simpson**, **Avril Lavigne**, and that's just not who I am at all."

Osbourne is certainly the first artist we've ever heard cop to being influenced by Berlin's 1982 neon-lit EP *Pleasure Victim*. Her sophomore release, *Sleeping in the Nothing* (it's a reference to the '80s fantasy flick *The NeverEnding Story*), is a pastiche

of throbbing new-wave synths ("Uh Oh") and seductive lyrics ("Secret Lover," which she admits is about ex **Bert McCracken** of the Used). "She's one of my favorite singers in the world," Osbourne says of Berlin's Terri Nunn.

Osbourne is, by our count, the fifth person we've queried about working with platinum-collecting producer/self-help guru **Linda Perry**. "She's amazing." (Yeah. We've heard.) Many of the lyrics on *Sleeping in the Nothing* were written in rehab (we know this because the note that came with the promo said, "Kelly wrote some songs in rehab") and recount her time spent being really famous and really, really wasted. "I can't erase where I came from and who my family is," she says. "I've had to embrace it, so other people should, too."



"Don't \*\*\*king stare at my cleavage!"

## This Machine Kills Brain Cells

On the eve of their first-ever headlining tour, New York space rockers the **Secret Machines** played a friends-and-family-only rehearsal at their Brooklyn practice space in early February. Although we are neither friendly nor related to the band, we showed up to enjoy their set, which included a stoner-friendly light show and stoner-friendly...weed. "I lost the ability to swallow," our reporter [name deleted because she may or may not be on probation] remembered with a shudder. "By the time you read this, you will have missed our whole tour," singer/bassist/key-boardist **Brandon Curtis** said, addressing Backstage Pass readers directly (the 31-city journey wrapped in March). "You're going to kick yourselves 20 years from now when your children ask why you didn't attend our show." We're not gonna let our kids listen to rock'n'roll.



"Did you just see that wall melt?"  
—Benjamin Curtis

## Lipstick Killers

We checked out the stash in the **Killers'** purple-rose-strewn dressing room shortly before the Las Vegas dandies' January appearance on *Saturday Night Live*, and we have to say, it was some good shit. We're not talking drugs—we're talking clothes. There was an array of suit jackets hanging in the shower stall where a naked hipsterette should have been, and flat surfaces were lightly dusted with MAC powder, not cocaine. We followed singer **Brandon Flowers** on his lipstick, which perfectly matched his hot-pink leather blazer. "It's not really lipstick; it's more of a gloss," Flowers corrected. We nodded, patiently waiting for him to go sing "Mr. Brightside" so we could totally raid his makeup case. Postshow, the band fretted over how to transport their garment bags (they need couture roadies), before climbing into a fleet of shiny black vans to travel to the after-party at Lemon Bar on Park Avenue. While debutantes fawned over impish hottie (and *SNL* host) **Topher Grace** and teen-queen go-to bad-boy **Wilmer Valderrama**, the band sipped expensive cocktails from the cash bar. "I never go out!" Flowers exclaimed, and by 2:30, the musical guests were on their way back to the hotel to partake in the ultimate rock-star indulgence: selecting tomorrow's outfit. *By Elizabeth Goodman*



"I, too, will be wearing your lip gloss tonight!"  
—Flowers with *SNL*'s Chris Pinnell



## Bye-Bye Johnny

When we finally realize that this mortal coil is more than a hard-to-find 4AD release, we wanna go out like Johnny Ramone, who passed away in September after a battle with prostate cancer. His grave site at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery will be marked for all eternity with a giant bronze statue by artist Wayne Toth. Rumored to cost \$100,000, the monument captures a young Ramone playing his beloved Mosrite guitar and makes him look like a general. The base bears the epitaph "If a man can judge success by how many great friends he has, then I have been very successful." True enough, as former bandmates **Tommy** and **CJ Ramone** joined Johnny's widow,

Linda Cummings, and friends **Eddie Vedder**, **Chili Peppers** **Anthony Kiedis** and **John Frusciante**, **Rob Zombie**, and actors **Nicolas Cage** and **Vincent Gallo** for the unveiling.

"He would have loved this," a teary Vedder said to the crowd. "He would have loved you being here. And he would've loved his statue." **Dee Dee Ramone** was there in spirit (he is buried in Hollywood Forever, along with **Rudolph Valentino** and **Mel Blanc**, the voice of **Bugs Bunny**).

"People are gonna pay tribute to [that statue]," Cage said. "Kids are gonna go, 'Who's that cool-looking guy over there with the guitar and the leather jacket and the funny haircut?' I want to be that guy." *Reported by Carrie Borzillo-Vrenna*



He never got stoned, so we bronzed him instead: Vedder and Cage gather with the other memorial service attendees before Johnny's monument; Vedder with his daughter, Olivia (inset)



*New Stuff*



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## Summer Saviors

A first look at the hot rocks rolling your way next season

By Kyle Anderson

Despite strong sales from veterans Green Day and newcomer the Game, a postholiday record-buying malaise spread with a vengeance in early 2005. But neither labels nor artists are panicking, because the start of this summer ushers in a number of high-profile releases that could cure the spring slump. Apply your sunscreen while these records turn up the heat.

### Coldplay

**WHY YOU CARE:** The multiplatinum smash *A Rush of Blood to the Head* was ideal mix-tape material, with gigantic, sentimental hits like "Clocks" and "The Scientist."

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** Frontman Chris Martin promises a dynamic album that will expand their sound, so look for louder pianos and higher falsettos.

**DUE:** June

### Audioslave

**WHY YOU CARE:** No one thought this two-headed monster combining Soundgarden and Rage Against the Machine would last, but they've sold more than two million copies of their debut and recorded a quick follow-up.

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** Tom Morello riffs, Chris Cornell walls, and producer Rick Rubin returns to provide more grit and beard advice.

**DUE:** June

### Weezer

**WHY YOU CARE:** After recording the band's fifth album in fits and starts, Rivers Cuomo has wrapped another semester at Harvard, preparing



the mysterious Weezer leader to seize the nerd-rock throne for good.

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** Rick Rubin has become Cuomo's "mentor," so Rivers can pursue his metal roots or finally attempt that rap record he promised *Spin* readers in 2002.

**DUE:** May

### Foo Fighters

**WHY YOU CARE:** Dave Grohl has been a rock machine since 2002's *One by One*, playing drums in Queens of the Stone Age, contributing to the latest from Garbage, and leading Probot.

**WHAT TO EXPECT:** A double-disc affair—one of rock songs and one of acoustic material—will finally split the difference between the two sides of Grohl's musical personality.

**DUE:** June



Still shackled by sound: Cornell and Morello

## Sound Bites



■ Lauryn Hill has been recording songs with Kanye West while working on her upcoming studio album, her first since her 1998 solo debut. The Fugees have said they will start planning their next group effort once Hill's record is complete.

■ Nearly all the original members of the Wu-Tang Clan have reunited to honor Ozzy Osbourne with a song tentatively titled "I Go Through Life," which will most likely be released this spring on a posthumous ODB album.

■ Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst lashed out at a crowd during a Texas concert, proclaiming from the stage: "I'd put a fucking gun to my head before I'd live in your state."

## WHO'S BEEN ARRESTED NOW?

### Suge Knight



For years, Death Row Records founder Marion "Suge" Knight has fought off rumors of his involvement in a number of high-profile crimes (the deaths of Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls, the assault on Dr. Dre at the 2004 Vibe Awards), but a far less controversial incident may send the 39-year-old to jail. Police say they pulled over Knight's black pickup truck in Barstow, California, on February 5 for an unsafe U-turn and found a small amount of marijuana in the vehicle, as well as an 18-year-old female passenger with a fake ID. Because of Knight's previous legal troubles—he was arrested for attacking two rappers at a recording studio in 1992; he pleaded no contest to trafficking firearms in 1995; he was charged in a Las Vegas assault just hours before Shakur's 1996 murder; he was busted for punching a parking attendant in 2003—this episode constitutes yet another violation of his parole and could result in a new prison sentence. Luckily for Knight, the offense is far too mild to send him to the real row. CARYN GANZ



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## Q&A

Moby

By Marc Spitz



In a move sure to alienate his younger, female fan base, Moby devours a unicorn

Moby is still vegan, still left-leaning, and still good for a dance-club hit or two...but just one or two. The 39-year-old former party monster's new double album, *Hotel*, contains none of the inspired sampling that made his 1999 smash, *Play*, so irresistible and ubiquitous. Almost emo in tone, *Hotel*, which comes with a second disc of percolating ambient tracks, may not sell many cars, but it might remind everyone that Moby is a fearless, mercurial artist first and an Eminem-squabbling, Natalie Portman-dating, space suit-wearing pop caricature second. With the record en route to high-end coffee shops throughout the world, we chatted with Moby about his latest reinvention.

**Hotel seems to signal a real creative shift. The samples have been replaced by live vocals and confessional lyrics. What's going on?** The thought of making a more esoteric, slightly trendy, dance-oriented record just didn't appeal to me at this point. And some of the songs are very, very personal. The most personal song is called "Slipping Away." And then there are a couple that are just frivolous and silly—like "Beautiful," which is the first single. It was intended as a slightly ironic, tongue-in-cheek song inspired by really rapid celebrity couples. I had this vision of Brad Pitt

and Jennifer Aniston sitting around and complimenting each other's beauty. Unfortunately, now they're broken up.

**You became seriously famous after *Play* took off—in a sense you've become one of those celebrities. Do you feel like you got too much exposure?** Yeah, but it was fun. If we do live in such a fame and celebrity-obsessed culture, it's kind of interesting to see it from the inside. When I made *Play*, I was convinced that it was the end of my career and I was going to have to go back to school

and become an architect. So when it became successful, it came as such a surprise that it made me want to go out and be a bit more celebratory. I realized in hindsight that one of the reasons I was so hedonistic was because I had a lot of emotional issues that I'd never really addressed, that I was trying to work out through degeneracy.

**Are you still a degenerate?** My socializing has definitely been curtailed. I had this period a few years ago where I was a little out of control, going out five or six nights a week. And one of the sad things is, it used to be the hangovers lasted about six hours—but now they last a day and a half. So even if I wanted to go out and be this promiscuous, hedonistic guy, I just can't. I'm physically incapable of it.

**How hard was it to select the 25 tracks on *Hotel* and *Hotel-Ambient*?** I ended up writing 200 or 250 songs. I spend a lot of time trying to figure out what the order should be, how long the songs should be, and how long the spaces between songs should be. This is going to sound like such a cranky old-guy thing to say, but I do feel like the album as a body of work is under siege. I love downloading and I love living in the 21st century, but it does seem like it's signaling the death of the album. When I was growing up, one of my favorite things to do was to put on one of my albums and get lost in it. Being an old curmudgeon, I still want to work hard to make

"I had a lot of issues that I'd never really addressed, that I was trying to work out through degeneracy."

albums, even if very few people are going to listen to it as a complete body of work.

**You're also still investing time in your downtown café, Teany.** I started this little business because it's fun, and it's interesting to do things that you've never done before. It's hard because I see so many public figures just gratuitously lending their name to products that I really don't understand. I just wonder why, like, Beyoncé's doing this Tommy Hilfiger thing, and isn't it enough to have \$50 million? Do you need \$51? I'm not being critical. I really don't want any more feuds, I just wonder about that.

**A Moby-Beyoncé feud would be good.** Oh, it wouldn't be good, because then all of a sudden Jay-Z and Damon Dash would be involved. I'd find myself at the bottom of the Hudson River.

# Honda Civic Tour presents Maroon 5.



## Expect some electricity in the air.

With songs like *This Love* and *Sunday Morning*, it's clear that Maroon 5 cares about music. But did you know they're also passionate about the environment? Which is why they wanted to be part of the Honda Civic Tour. As part of the tour, Maroon 5 got to customize a Civic Hybrid. That's the Ultra-Low-Emission gas/electric car from Honda. They also unleashed their creativity on the efficient Civic Coupe. To see the customized cars, and for details about when Maroon 5 is coming to your town, go to [hondacivictour.com](http://hondacivictour.com). And get ready for an electric evening.

March 11	Los Angeles, CA	April 1	Philadelphia, PA	April 22	Milwaukee, WI
March 12	Los Angeles, CA	April 2	Boston, MA	April 23	Minneapolis, MN
March 16	Corpus Christi, TX	April 4	Amherst, MA	April 25	Lincoln, NE
March 19	Dallas, TX	April 6	New York, NY	April 26	Denver, CO
March 21	Atlanta, GA	April 7	New York, NY	April 29	Portland, OR
March 22	Charlotte, NC	April 8	New York, NY	April 30	Seattle, WA
March 24	Miami, FL	April 14	Detroit, MI	May 4	Fresno, CA
March 25	Tampa, FL	April 15	Pittsburgh, PA	May 5	San Francisco, CA
March 26	Orlando, FL	April 16	Columbia, MD	May 6	Sacramento, CA
March 28	Norfolk, VA	April 18	Cleveland, OH	May 8	Anaheim, CA
March 29	Harrisburg, PA	April 19	Chicago, IL	May 9	San Diego, CA
March 31	Pittsburgh, PA	April 21	St. Louis, MO	May 11	Phoenix, AZ



Tour dates and locations are subject to change or cancellation. © 2005 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

## Surviving the Hot Fuss

How to safely endure two days of Coachella, music's most blazing (we mean it!) festival

By Caryn Ganz

Since 1999, thousands of music fans have braved dehydration, sunstroke, and the sight of gangly rock critics in cargo shorts to attend the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival, a two-day marathon held on a palm-tree-lined polo field in the Southern California desert. With its big-name headliners and diverse line-ups, the fest has quickly established itself as a modern-day Woodstock of the West (minus the price-gouging, fires, and rioting). This year's bill promises highly anticipated reunions (Bauhaus, Gang of Four, Cocteau Twins), blockbuster favorites (Coldplay, Weezer, Nine Inch Nails), and buzz bands (the Arcade Fire, M.I.A., Bloc Party), but the experience can be daunting: 100,000 expected attendees, more than 90 acts, two outdoor stages, three tents, 100-plus degrees, and at least four inebriated cast members from Fox teen dramas. For a fun and arrest-free weekend, let *Spin* guide you through the basics of Coachella survival.

### □ FINDING YOUR CAR

**DON'T** base your parking-lot strategy on "We're to the left of the Jeep that's the same color as Weezer's 'Blue Album,' man!" Your sunscreen-teary eyes will scan thousands of dirt-caked cars at the end of each day, so pay close attention to landmarks that aren't likely to change over 12 hours, like the entrance gate.

### □ AVOIDING A TRIP TO THE FESTIVAL POKEY

**DON'T** even think about sticking your stash in a pack of Camels (or hanging out with Andy Dick). The Coachella security team is on orange alert (we had a *pen* confiscated last year), so leave plenty of time for a very intimate search and prepare to fork over your PowerBars, Tylenols, and dignity.

### □ STAYING ALIVE

**DON'T** dehydrate. Water is priced fairly at Coachella (two bucks a bottle), so drink it. Drink it like it's Jack Daniel's and you're David Lee Roth circa 1979. With the amount of sweat pouring off every surface of your body, we guarantee you won't have to pee.

### □ FINDING YOUR FRIENDS

**DON'T** rely on your cell phone to keep up with your crew. Wireless communication breaks down around your 100th "Where are you?" text, thanks to the 49,999 other people doing the exact same thing at the end of each day. (Hint: Catch up on calls during the headliners' sets.) Arrange a meet-up spot that isn't the exit gate.

### □ WATCHING THE ROCK

**DON'T** underestimate the time it takes to trek from the smaller Gobi tent to the main stage. Coachella's set times are for real, and the tents fill up quickly (and become uncomfortably aromatic) for the most anticipated acts. Stake out your spot early for the best view of whatever clever message Chris Martin has scrawled on his hand.

### □ SPECIAL GOTH ADVISORY

Due to the high number of black-clad fans expected this year (see Bauhaus, Nine Inch Nails, et al.), please note: Vinyl and PVC don't breathe; no parasols are allowed on festival grounds; white makeup may mask a potentially dangerous burn.



Coldplay's  
Chris Martin



NIN's Trent  
Reznor



Hall-baked: "Today we learned what a 'dry heat' feels like."



The Arcade  
Fire's Regine  
Chassagne



Weezer's  
Rivers  
Cuomo

### FIVE MUST-SEE ACTS ON SATURDAY, 4/30

**MF Doom:** language-bending masked marauder of the rap underground  
**Spoon:** indie-rock saviors with tuneful pop hooks  
**Razorlight:** swaggering Britpop fronted by the eccentric Johnny Borrell  
**Jean Grae:** the queen of anti-big-biz hip-hop  
**The Kills:** tense, driving boy-girl blues rock



### FIVE MUST-SEE ACTS ON SUNDAY, 5/1

**Autolux:** fuzzed-out, spacey rock backed by big beats  
**The Fiery Furnaces:** quirky, carnival-like, post-punk brother/sister duo  
**The Perceptionists:** agit-rapper Mr. Lif puts on a new-school clinic  
**Wolf Eyes:** ear-searing, eyeball-popping noise rock  
**Black Star:** Mos Def and Talib Kweli reunite to collect their due in the post-Kanye era



Genuine Flavor. Cold Filtered Smooth. Miller Genuine Draft.



Good call.



# The Records That Changed My Life

## Ben Gibbard of Death Cab for Cutie

By Adrienne Day

Photograph by Autumn de Wilde

Death Cab for Cutie and Postal Service frontman Ben Gibbard, 28, spent his youth in Bremerton, Washington, during the early '90s, a stone's throw from grunge-era Seattle. But the revolution going on upstream never took with this soft-spoken indie-rock fan. "I wasn't an angry kid," he says. "My parents are still married. I have no real angst in my life." Had Mr. and Mrs. Gibbard broken up the world may have lost a great openhearted songwriter (and the Red House Painters might have lost a fan).

**BOB DYLAN THE FREEWHEELIN' BOB DYLAN** (Columbia, 1963) "My dad is a rock'n'roll product of the '60s. When I was growing up, I remember sitting with him at Christmas, and he was playing stuff that wasn't really doing it for me—like Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen—but then he put on *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, and I'll never forget, when 'Girl From the North Country' came on, watching him being taken back to his youth. I'll always have that image of my dad, thinking of some girl in high school."

**TEENAGE FANCLUB BANDWAGONESQUE** (DGC, 1991) "Bremerton's only real cultural export is, unfortunately, MxPx. Back then, you either listened to straight-edge hardcore or Bad Religion. But punk rock never resonated with me. I think I heard 'Star Sign' on the radio, and I just bought this record on a whim and it was instantaneous—I loved it. I'd never heard Big Star or Alex Chilton or anything that came before *Bandwagonesque*. It was a reverse introduction."

**SUPERCUNK FOOLISH** (Merge, 1994) "I love faded love songs, and *Foolish*, which is about Mac McCaughan and Laura Ballance's breakup, is an undervalued work of inspiration. I saw Supercunk in Seattle on the *Foolish* tour in June of '94, when I had just graduated from high school. I had to take this ferry home after shows, and I remember running to catch the 11:30 ferry as they were kicking into my favorite song."

**AFGHAN WHIGS GENTLEMEN** (Elektra, 1993) "I got into this record during a trip to Seattle, and it made me thoroughly depressed. The cover alone just breaks my heart. To me it



encapsulates so much about male and female relationships. It's a very male—well, very Greg Dulli—perspective, very piggyish and unapologetic about being an asshole guy. I made the mistake of buying this record for girls I've dated, and some of them got really angry."

**CODEINE FRIGID STARS** (Sub Pop, 1990) "I first heard Codeine on some Sub Pop sampler I had stolen from my college's radio station. I thought it had to be a joke. There were no drums, and it was so slow that I thought it was on the wrong speed. This was that period in college when it was just stereo wars all the time, so I bought *Frigid Stars* on cassette and cranked it in my dorm room. And this girl that I was dating passed out, no alcohol or drugs, three songs into the record. It really attests to [a band's power] when you can play something so loudly and somebody just passes out."

**SLINT SPIDERLAND** (Touch & Go, 1991) "We were just sitting around one night, smoking pot, and my friend put on *Spiderland* and I was totally blown away. It was really dark and emotional, but also creepy. Brian McMahan has this vulnerable kid's voice—a friend once said he sounds like Big Bird—but he's backed by this incredibly powerful band. A couple of years ago, I was hanging out at some bars with Jimmy from

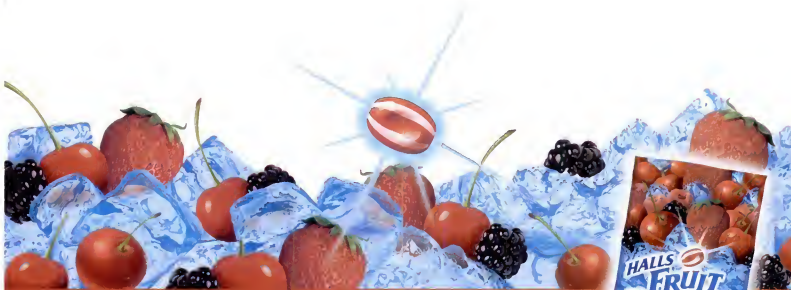
the Postal Service and this other guy, Pedro. A lanky guy with this beard comes in and sits on the stairs, all kind of weird, and Pedro says, 'Oh hey, Ben, this is Brian McMahan.' And the guy says, 'Nice to meet you,' in that same creepy voice. I was like 'Aaaahh—you've been in my head for the last ten years!'"

**RED HOUSE PAINTERS RED HOUSE PAINTERS** (4AD, 1993) "The first time we met, [Death Cab's] Chris Walla asked me if I had heard this record. I went out and bought it. It marks the beginning of our friendship—it's very much a touchstone for everything I do. The way the songs open up into all these new colors is just incredible. They're so sad and well-written and expansive. You can't fake this kind of emotion."

**BILLY BRAGG WORKERS PLAYTIME** (Elektra, 1988) "It seems like the most appropriate time to get into this would be in college [especially if you're] interested in socialism, but I came across Billy Bragg only four or five years ago, and he's become one of my favorite songwriters. For the past four years, we did our little part for the last election, started to become more aware of the world around us, and Bragg speaks about these things in a really articulate manner. By the time this record's over, it's a rally call."



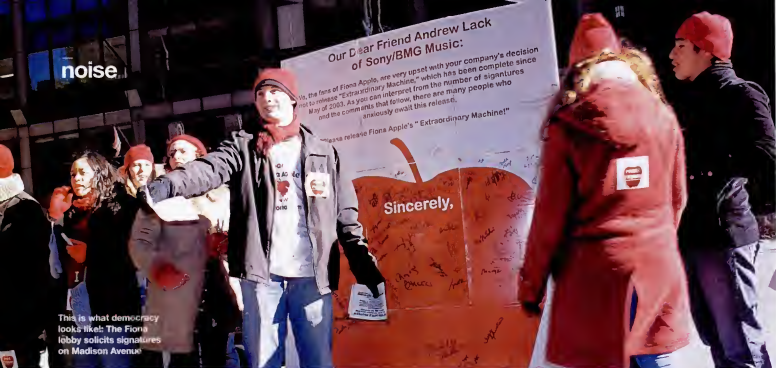
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This is what democracy looks like: The Fiona lobby solicits signatures on Madison Avenue



T-minus ten seconds to tantrum: Apple

## Take It to the Streets

Fiona Apple's core constituents see red as album gets "shelved"

By Evan Serpick

From raucous rallies against slavery in the 19th century to massive antiwar demonstrations in 2003, New York City has long served as a stage for some of the most important protest movements in American history. In 2005, about 20 people banded together for a decidedly less earth-shattering cause.

A group of intrepid dissenters braved single-digit temperatures and countless shouts of "Get a job!" to express their discontent with Sony-owned Epic Records' failure to release *Extraordinary Machine*, the long-awaited album by singer/songwriter Fiona Apple. *Machine's* producer, Jon Brion, says the record was completed in May 2003, and organizers insist the label is holding out for a more commercial product. Epic president Steve Barnett says that Apple "is still in the midst of recording her next album."

*Spin* tagged along at the January 28 demonstration to provide a minute-by-minute account.

**11:00 A.M.** The schedule posted on command-center website [freefiona.com](http://freefiona.com) said proceedings would begin at 11 with a welcome speech in front of Sony's offices at 550 Madison Avenue. But it's difficult to discern anything going on until we spot organizer David Muscato decked out in Apple-red tie, Apple-red shirt, and Apple-red scarf. The 21-year-old real estate developer and musician from Missouri has mobilized a movement: The Free Fiona campaign sent Sony hundreds of foam apples and started an online petition containing 23,000 dignified signatories, including "Catwoman" and "blair23."

The lack of protesters to welcome gives Muscato a chance to recount an encouraging call that he'd received yesterday. "I haven't been able to verify that it was him, but the caller said it was [Sony CEO] Andrew Lack," he says. "He asked me what time the protest

was. I said 11 to 2. He asked if I was gonna be there. I said yeah. He said, 'Okay, I'll see you there.'"

**11:10 A.M.** Two police officers approach Muscato—who had a permit for the day's events—and show him his "protest arena," a roughly two-by-ten-foot area near the curb. They also inform him he can't use his megaphone—which seems unnecessary, anyway, since the crowd has grown to only five. "I personally spoke to 60 people who told me they are going to be here," he says confidently.

**11:50 A.M.** The protest has swelled to 20 red-hatted Fionaphiles, including Bill Bowers, 32, who drove down from Vermont. Enduring a subzero windchill, he seems to be having second thoughts: "This seemed like a rational idea at some point." Twenty-year-old Ross Archibald traveled from Elgin, Scotland, to let his amusingly accented voice be heard. "I canno' feel me fingers!" he

proclaims to unanimous snickers.

**12:30 P.M.** Shivering protesters ask harried passersby to sign a seven-foot poster of an apple and endure responses like "She sucks!" and "Are you kidding?" When they stop limo driver Milton Rivera, he responds with a quick, resounding "No." "I thought they said, 'Free Leona'—Leona Helmsley," he confides after the Fiona phalanx leaves. So has he heard of Fiona? "How do you pronounce



Pit boss: organizer David Muscato

the name? With an F?" Yeah. "And she is..." She's a singer. "Really? Never heard of her. [Pauses] I wouldn't go for a 'Free Leona' movement, not with all the negativity I've read about her."

**1:30 P.M.** Shouting over a chant of "No single, no problem! We want the whole album!" Muscato defends his activism. "Other issues are very important. We had a link on our website that said while you've got your credit card out [to contribute to the Free Fiona campaign], please donate to the Red Cross for the tsunami thing."

**1:50 P.M.** As the protest thins to a close, Muscato calls Lack's office to present the signatures. "Do you think Mr. Lack will be able to come down and talk to us?" he asks cheerily. "Okay, maybe we can just come up and present our petition.... Can I just leave the petition in the lobby and have someone bring it up to him? Um, okay, thanks anyway. Bye."

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1.7.05

## George Clinton and the P-Funk All-Stars/TV on the Radio

Brooklyn Academy of Music  
Brooklyn, New York

Black folks invented rock'n'roll. You know that, right? Yet somehow it still seems like a cultural-historic event when brown-skinned dudes, Prince aside, plug in and bring the noise—with guitars. So it's appropriate that this smart double bill took place at BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, a cultural-historic temple in the spiritual hub of both modern hip-hop and the 20-year-old Black Rock Coalition—a think tank whose founding fathers declared the Stratocaster to be as essential to African-American art as the MC's microphone.

TV on the Radio obviously held that truth to be self-evident. The most original band to crawl out of Brooklyn's new-rock scene, they deservedly won last year's Shortlist Music Prize for the doo-wopping post-punk soul of *Desperate Youth, Blood Thirsty Babies*. But they're still learning to take it to the stage. Frontman Tunde Adebimpe gesticulated like a new-wave Al Green, pogoing so enthusiastically he didn't notice his untied Converse. He sang about modern love with a high-strung falsetto, as did guitarist/lead afro Kyp Malone (although they skipped their cover of "Modern Romance" by pals Yeah Yeah Yeahs). Gerard Smith's bass lines shook the plaster, as did the freelance double-baritone horn section. But the group's secret weapon remains lone white boy David Andrew Sitek, an obvious Sonic Youth fan who attacked his guitar with drumsticks and sleigh bells. The set concluded with the band encircling the drum set in a Williamsburg tribal jam, trying to navigate the divide between studio experimentation and showmanship. They'll get there yet.



"Please don't call this a drum circle": TV on the Radio



Flying the funk flag high: Sadly, George Clinton (left) and Gary Shider didn't have time to lecture on the dangers of pee-funk

Shortly after Kanye West's "Spaceship" cruised through the P.A., the P-Funk mothership landed. Keyboardist Bernie Worrell traded classical riffs with guest fiddler Lili Haydn (we were in an opera house) as a prelude to "Maggot Brain," a bleeding-heart spazz-out that shames most post-Phish doodling. At points 20-members strong, the band pumped out faves like "Flash Light" and "(Not Just) Knee Deep" alternately sloppy-stoned and hard up for the downstroke. Guitarist Gary Shider still wore an XXL diaper. Sir Nose D'Void of Funk still preened in a white-fur pimp hat and foot-long plastic schnoz. There was a roadie whose sole job appeared to be snatching audience "gifts" from George Clinton's eager hands before the rainbow-dreadlocked band-leader got too high (clearly a losing battle). Too bad that with so many world-class MCs in the 'hood, only Clinton's granddaughter Shonda rocked the mic, and barely. But by the time an exotic dancer broke out her hula hoop, it was obvious this long-running freak show still partied on its own terms. And so it did, until, at the 10:30 mark, the curtain was dropped on the band mid-song: These old funkateers were clearly prepared to motor on to the break of dawn. WILL HERMES

1.15.05

## The Dears

Mercury Lounge  
New York City

Sounding as if they busted out of a secret lab beneath the *NME* offices, Montreal sextet the Dears unraveled an hour of elegantly droning melodies with an intimacy well-suited for the cozy Mercury Lounge. Flanked by two eager boys modeling their rock moves and two lasses in chokers and scarves harmonizing sweetly, singer/guitarist Murray Lightburn bawled lost raincoats, cigarettes, and love with an unhurried intensity. Lightburn is the dandiest doomsaying scenester since Arthur Lee, and the Dears' apocallyptically titled *No Cities Left* adorns the oracular orchestral-pop of Lee's Love with the hopeless grandeur of the Smiths. But where Morrissey politely asked for someone to "Take me out tonight," Lightburn's languid requests ("Take me for a drive to the coastline / Pull me to the depths of the sea") transform from operatic to ferocious in seconds. Before the chip on his shoulder overwhelmed the singer with despair, keyboardist Natalia Yanchak coaxed out his gorgeous falsetto on the Sinatra/Hazlewood tribute "22: The Death of All Romance," reminding the crowd that Lightburn needs to be loved, just like everybody else does. SEAN HOWE



"This venue is intimate!": The Dears' Lightburn (right) and Patrick Krief



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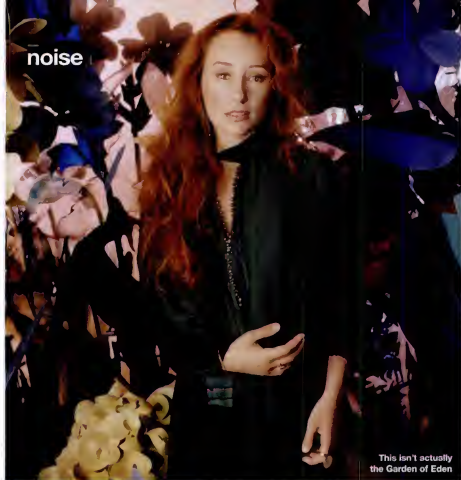


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## Larger Earthquakes

On a new album and in a new book, Tori Amos reacts to the tragedies and triumphs that recently rocked her world

By Laura Sinagra

For Tori Amos, the piano-pumping songstress who named her daughter Lothlorien after one of Tolkien's elf kingdoms, gone are the days of provocative pig suckling and throwing bad boys into volcanoes. In February she released her relatively demure eighth album, *The Beekeeper*, as well as her mystical guide to the artistic process, *Piece by Piece* (written with rock critic Ann Powers). Calling from her castle in England, Amos talked about surviving a less than pretty good year and getting even more in touch with her feminine side.

You're sending wildflower seeds with some of the copies of *The Beekeeper*. Well, we're all trying to figure out what our relationship to the earth is, whether you were affected by hurricanes in Florida or the tsunami. When I started this [album], there were physical storms happening, as well as emotional storms for me. The idea for *The Beekeeper* came after listening to politicians talk about the Bible and thinking about something so old being very current because people are still arguing about it. As a minister's daughter, I felt it was time that I go into the teachings that I was brought up with and maybe turn them around a little bit.

Have you outgrown the characterization of "angry young woman"? I certainly still get angry,

but I don't walk around being angry because I'm under somebody else's control. It's like in "The Power of Orange Knickers" [from *The Beekeeper*]: "Who is this terrorist?" It's very easy to point your finger at the guy with the turban. Or if you're the guy with the turban, it's easy to point your finger at the guy with the Army uniform. But sometimes it's harder to point the finger at someone in your own family or your boyfriend or your friends.

You often use the terms *masculinity* and *femininity* in your music and writing. There's male and female in everyone. I think breast-feeding a child can get your female self up to speed—or she just wants to flee out the back door. Since I became a mom, my female self has gotten to know who she is and begun to really enjoy it. As I say, I enjoy being a gal.

Are you one of the "women who have walked the dark walk" that you describe in your book? Yes, I'm one of those women who walked it! And yet, being only 41, I don't know what's ahead. I lost a brother this year, and it has been difficult. It was such a shock because he died in an automobile accident. I don't think that there is an acceptable yet. I put some of it in the music, and that's how I'm always able to work through emotions.

## HEAVY ROTATION

WHAT'S BLASTING THROUGH THE SPIN OFFICES THIS MONTH

### The Impossible Shapes

Horus (Secretly Canadian) These Indiana indie rockers trip nervously like Love and muse enigmatically like Pavement, but their fifth album is composed and played with a remarkably tight focus. Few bands daydream and fake out with such a mature sense of purpose. (Charles Aaron, music editor)

### Uncut

Those Who Were Hung Hung Hung (Paper Bag) Several riffs on this Toronto quartet's debut left off the New Order truck, but here of post-hardcore chugga-chugga and singer Ian Worang's scur, horse laments steer Uncut away from tribute-band purgatory. (Peter Gaston, mobile editor and producer)

### Death Angel

Archives & Artifacts (Rykko) In 1986, Death Angel looked like the next Metallica. They came from the Bay Area and thrashed like hair-farming superheros. This three-CD collection also features rarities, including one semi-satanic track produced by Kirk Hammett. (Chuck Klosterman, senior writer)

### The Peels

The Peels (Dim Mak) Robyn Miller's unmistakable, throaty thrills drives the relentless, steaming, blues-punk of this San Francisco quartet, which races like a speeding train—either get on board or get flattened. (Caryn Ganz, associate editor)

### The Breakup Society

James at 35 (Get Hip) As their name suggests, these younger, fresher fellows apply power pop to sad-sack songs about jealousy, lost love, and the crush-worthiness of Robin Zander. So real you can smash the rec room paneling. (Doug Brod, executive editor)

### The Reverend Al Green

Everything's OK (Blue Note) The second in a row with Willie Mitchell, who produced Green's uncatchably awesome early '70s albums, features the august soul genius still full of fire, wringing blues blood out of laid-back throw-back grooves. (Jon Dolan, senior associate editor)

### MC Chris

Eating's Not Cheating (DC Flag) With a pseudo-Eminem flow, Miami booty-bass beats, and lyrics as hilarious as the Cartoon Network characters he voices, MC Chris is more Tanacious D than thug. (Sarah Lawrence, assistant editor)

### Judas Priest

Angel of Retribution (Epit) Rob Halford is back with the Priest, and again making your grandpappy's metal, with razor-sharp riffs, monstrous drums, and a song ("Judas Rising") that'll make you want to kill things. (Kyle Anderson, editorial assistant)

### The Impossible Shapes





"Enough talk of class warfare—let's practice our broad jump": Gordon Moakes, Matt Tong, Kele Okereke, and Russell Lissack

## Bloc Party

History suggests that every rocker in a vintage T-shirt who reads a line of Marx will start a political post-punk band. But when Bloc Party began writing leftist death-disco anthems, frontman Kele Okereke claims that their music was inspired by a different kind of sentence. "We all met in prison," he says with grave sincerity. "We played together in the cell." Then he pauses, adding another minor detail: "Did I mention that none of this is true?"

Remarkably, it was the 23-year-old Londoner's sincerity (in the form of a personal

note) that helped Bloc Party land a gig with Franz Ferdinand two years ago. The quartet's full-length debut, *Silent Alarm* (Vice), is as bouncy as their Scottish mates' smash album, but it's more preoccupied with cheating governments than unfaithful girlfriends. *Alarm* zigzags through dance-punk rave-ups and gauzy ballads while drummer Matt Tong pounds his bass pedal like he's stomping out a fire and Okereke's soaring tenor wails like a siren. On the rant "Helicopter," he condemns blue jeans and red states, and also rages

By Melissa Maerz  
Photograph by David Ellis

against U.K. apathy. "I'm not just talking about America," he says, "I'm talking about the people queuing up for the McDonald's by my house."

So does Bloc Party hope to inspire listeners to take a stand? "I don't think there's any way to change things," Okereke says somberly. "The only thing you can do to take yourself away from what's happening in the world is to focus on the internal. That's why so many people write completely blinkers songs about love."





Rocking a one-party system: Early Nicklaus, Amanda Okonek, Jason Holstrom, Jon E. Rock, Peter Sali, Noah Star Weaver, and Derek Chan

## United State of Electronica

**Who:** Seven-piece disco-rock band from Seattle whose Vocodered hooks, insistent tunes, and ridiculously joyful stage shows have made them one of the Northwest's most popular live acts. They've sold more than 10,000 copies of their self-released, self-titled 2004 debut, thanks largely to Internet buzz. Now, hometown indie Sonic Boom is reissuing it nationally.

**Sound like:** High-energy, ultra-positive dance tracks with 29-year-old drummer Jon E. Rock tossing in goofball raps about working as a

night-shift security guard. U.S.E. eschew irony but gleefully grab Junior Senior's songcraft, Daft Punk's sonics, and the B-52's' rollicking moxie. **You don't know Jaxx:** Their lineup and the free-for-all, constant motion of their live gigs were inspired by a Basement Jaxx show. "They come through town with a troupe of divas and dancers," says keyboardist/frontman Noah Star Weaver, 26, "and I thought, 'Why not have a posse with girls and boys, and make it a party?'"

**Next stop, Osaka:** The band brought the first 90

By Michaelangelo Matos

hand-painted copies of their album to a show in a nearby town and sold them all before they played their first note. Their unofficial theme song, "Emerald City," features shout-outs to Seattle neighborhoods ("Belltown? We love it!"). "At first, we were just singing, 'New York City,'" says Weaver. "But there were already so many songs about New York." Despite their local appeal, U.S.E. scored a No. 2 hit on Japan's dance-music chart with "It Is On!" No small feat, says singer Amanda Okonek, 24. "We beat U2!"

More New Music to Hear Now By Jon Dolan



### Black Lipstick *Sincerely* (Peek-A-Boo)

Today's big-ticket indie bands tend to be anthemic and charismatic. But this Austin, Texas-based quartet is sloppy, drowsy, and sexily no-account. So when their glistening Television guitars make transcendently fuzzy-noisy, or their New Order bass bothers with worried romanticism, it's almost revelatory.

### Mars Black *Folks Music* (Team Love)

The only rapper on Conor Oberst's label shares his patron's rural background ("We from Nebraska, all we got is beef") and pure heart ("Damn this crown of thorns"). They got corn in Nebraska, too, and Mars brings it by the bushel, balancing goofily documented self-hate with lovingly bogus self-mythologizing.

### 22-20s *22-20s* (Heavenly/EMI)

Five years ago, these Brits might have been a big-beat dance combo, or a Spiritualized knockoff, and in a way their designer neobles suggest a bit of both. They have so much fun missing their goal of a 2005 *Exile on Main Street* that they actually stumle upon something all their own.





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# The Used

## Major League Baseball 2K5

From: Take 2 For PlayStation 2, Xbox

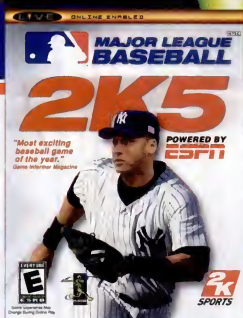
Die-hard MLB fans and self-styled video game junkies the Used put us up on *Major League Baseball 2K5*:

You've got to love a game that goes for less than the cost of nosebleed seats; the \$20 asking price is money well spent. The game includes personalized skyboxes (try killing time with trivia challenges and shuffleboard simulations) and an ESPN-powered, TV-style presentation.

But besides authentic pregame reports and riveting play-by-play coverage, you're also getting some amazing action here. The K Zone pitching interface—players must line up crosshairs to successfully skirt

tosses past home plate—is idiot-proof. Maximum fielding mechanics make scoring diving catches and double plays a cinch. Baserunning functions are the best we've ever seen. Built-in broadband features (even provisions for online leagues) come at a superb too, as does an exhaustive franchise mode. And dozens of graphical touches like picture-in-picture displays and authentically recreated arenas round out the package.

In terms of overall atmosphere, as athletes who resemble their real-



world counterparts, the title's totally convincing. Vocal contributions by Jon Miller, Joe Morgan, and Karl Ravech kick its credibility up another notch. You'll be lost in the moment the second the sound of screaming fans and the crack of the bat blasts from your speakers.



photo credit: Seth Smoot



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# Bowling for Soup

## Pennant Chase Baseball

From: Nintendo®. For: GameCube

Bowling for Soup's "Greatest Day" may be the title track for Nintendo® Pennant Chase Baseball, but it's not the only reason the game's a star player, says the band:

Who's on first? Not Mario, although truthfully, we would've loved watching him bean Bowser. Instead, you get the complete roster of official MLB players and teams, each sporting the most current stats possible. Tailored toward thrill-starved GameCube owners, this platform-exclusive affair appears primed for World Series stardom. It's a pretty impressive showing for a prospect that wasn't even on scouts' radars last season. If we do say so ourselves.

Go ahead and laugh; if Boston can pull it off, so can Nintendo®. Appropriately enough, the publishers partnered with Red Sox slugger David

Ortiz, whose likeness adorns the title's cover. Consider it a good match, given that both prove capable performers in a pinch. Feel free to sweat the spiritual connection as you rack up the RBIs at 30 big-name ballparks.

Pick off runners at Wrigley. Bat for the bleachers at Yankee Stadium. Aim the odd fastball at Curt Schilling's kisser... whatever. We won't tell. If it's an available option on the diamond, rest assured, it's in the game.

An added bonus: Cubs commentator Bob Brenly and Mariners standbys Rick Rizzs and Tom Hutyler call the shots as the excitement unfolds. And the visuals



aren't bad to boot, with a full-fledged 3-D graphics engine translating half-hearted jabs at the controller into eye-opening stunts. Frankly, at a glance, you'd never guess the game was making its rookie debut.

Granted, we're bummed Yoshi and Princess Peach are no-shows. But assuming you're on the market for an enjoyable arcade experience, well then, bat's all folks!

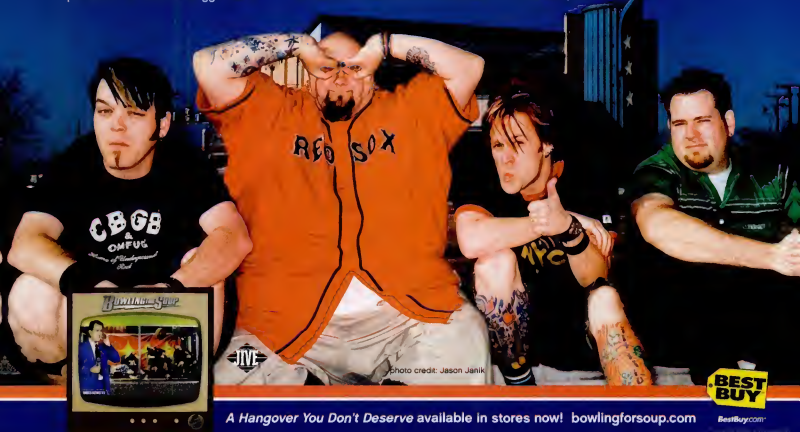


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PlayStation 2



# Louis XIV

## ON MVP Baseball 2005™

From: Electronic Arts For: GameCube, PC, PlayStation 2, Xbox, PSP

Louis XIV see *MVP Baseball 2005*™ making headlines... and not just because the game features their smash single "Finding Out True Love Is Blind":

Whoa...looks like EA Sports™ just belted another one out of the park. Last year's *MVP* is back and batting a thousand with enhanced controls, slicker play, and more addictive mini-games. So even if you don't dig outfitting stadiums from seats to scoreboards in the all-new owner mode, it's still a sweet simulation of America's national pastime.

Our favorite features? Let's start with the just-added precision pitching meter that allows for greater accuracy on the mound. Then there's the unique Hitter's Eye system, which allows you to determine whether a slider or curve ball is coming based on color-coded throws.

An improved user interface also makes it easier to avoid outfielders, steal bases, and climb walls for picture-perfect catches. The fact that you're provided options for creating custom ballparks and recruiting rookies from the minor leagues is pretty crazy as well.

Anybody who's stuck home Saturday night isn't confined to playing alone, either; the range of online features offered is insane. Kicking a friend's ass over a broadband connection is so much fun we're almost ashamed to admit it.

Packing support for Spring Training and loads of legendary players to unlock, it's an all-star outing. And remember...it's all fun and games until somebody slings beer at the TV. Now, that's what we call foul ball.

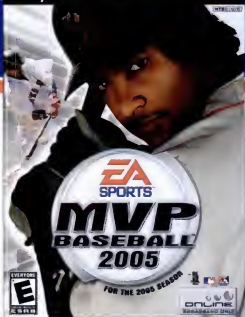


photo credit: Andy Willsher



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# the High Speed Scene

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From: Sony. For: Playstation 2, PSP

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## Masterson of the Universe

Forty-eight hours in the life of *That '70s Show's* Danny Masterson, club promoter, radio DJ, fashion plate, Scientologist, devoted boyfriend, and—oh, yeah—TV star  
By Strawberry Saroyan  
Photographs by Joe Toreno

As he steps out of the exclusive West Hollywood nightclub Guy's on a Sunday evening in January, Danny Masterson looks less like a refugee from the 1970s than an unmistakably stylish product of the 21st century. The 29-year-old actor is decked out in a Paul Smith suit, with a Patrón on the rocks in his hand and an American Spirit dangling from his mouth, looking every bit the Hollywood kid done good. Tonight, as he has every



## exposure |

Sunday night since last September, Masterson will be running the Kid's Cotton Club, his weekly Prohibition-era theme party at which all his guests are expected to dress at least as dapper as he does. "It's young and cool," he says as he surveys the scene, before adding with a smile, "It's full of assholes, like me."

For the past seven years, Masterson has been best known to television audiences as Hyde, the wisecracking stoner of *That '70s Show*. But even as the cast of the long-running Fox sitcom has evolved into this generation's answer to the Rat Pack, Masterson is perhaps the least clearly defined member of the gang. He's not a singularly focused career man like his costar Topher Grace, nor a perplexingly effective starlet magnet, à la Wilmer Valderrama, nor a maddeningly ubiquitous smirkster with a well-known girlfriend (guess who). If Masterson doesn't easily stand out in this crowd, it's because he represents a distinctly different third-millennium phenomenon—the show business multiphysphenate who doesn't feel like he's doing anything unless he's doing a million things at once.

Despite the pounding rain and the competition from Guy's celebrated round-the-corner neighbor, the Ivy, Masterson will be relentlessly busy for most of the night, greeting wave after wave of post-People's Choice Awards revelers clad in silks, satins, and suits. In recent weeks, everyone from legendary jazz trumpeter Roy Hargrove to Maroon 5's Adam Levine has stopped by his party to sit in with the house band and hang with such regulars as Masterson's friend and costar Valderrama. "I've never met such a gentleman in my entire life besides my dad," says TV's Fez, who's



Masterson's thugged-out skullcap and look of desperation circa 1990. Chest hair? Pure '70s, baby.

dressed tonight in a P. Diddy-esque ensemble, complete with a silver chain dangling from his waistband. "Great taste, surrounds himself with friends. And he likes brown people."

Masterson saves his warmest regards of the evening for girlfriend Bijou Phillips, the wild-child actress and Hilton-sister posse member, who on at least one occasion walks straight up to Masterson and begins making out with him. Despite a recent report in *US Weekly* that they had broken up ("If that magazine burned up into a fiery ball," Masterson says, "it would be great"), the two are inseparable for the next several hours, nodding their heads to the band's bebop punctuations while Masterson sways with his hand around Phillips' waist. Of course, the event wouldn't be as popular as it is if everyone was granted the same degree of hospitality: Earlier in the night, Valderrama's ex-girlfriend Lindsay Lohan showed up at the door with a small crew and was turned away.

The following evening, Masterson is easier to get to know, if a bit less peppy: He was up until 9 A.M. playing poker with the after-club crowd and lost \$1,600. But now, at his Hollywood restaurant, Geisha House (in which he's invested with his brother Christopher, as well as Valderrama and Sean Astin), he happily wolfs down cowboy rolls (beef, scallions, and cream cheese), while chronicling his career trajectory in between bites.

"I was that really cute kid with the huge blond Afro," says Masterson, a Long Island,

New York native who was commuting into Manhattan for modeling jobs from the age of four. "It was so much fun because when you're a kid, people treat you like a kid, but when you're working, they treat you almost as an adult. It's, 'Hey, man, what did you do today? Did you get any G.I. Joes?' As opposed to, like, 'Hi, boy, do your homework.'"

While his modeling work segued into an acting career, Masterson's parents separated when he was eight, and he, his mother, and his four siblings moved to Los Angeles eight years later. Masterson found steady employment, including stints on *Roseanne* and *Cybill*, but by age 20 he'd decided to take a break from TV. Coincidentally, that's when he was approached by producers Bonnie and Terry Turner (*Saturday Night Live*, *3rd Rock From the Sun*) to read a scene for a comedy pilot they had tentatively titled *Feeling Groovy*. "I did each line in a different character," Masterson says. "I said my first line like myself, the second line as a Scottish man, the third line as a pirate, for absolutely no fucking reason. But I thought it was funny." When the Turners offered him a role in what would become *That '70s Show*, Masterson took it, even though they wouldn't give him a complete script for the first episode. "How cool is that?" he says. "I took that job all on faith."

Today, the '70s cast members are among his dearest friends—Ashton Kutcher and Valderrama are close pals, and brother

## Danny's Indie 101 Playlist

- Lou Reed, "Walk on the Wild Side"
- Coldplay, "Trouble" (Live on KCRW)
- Thom Yorke, "After the Gold Rush"
- Elvis Costello, "Alison"
- The Rapture, "Infatuation"
- Mazzy Star, "Five String Serenade"
- The Kills, "Wait"
- The Verve, "The Drugs Don't Work"
- The Buzzcocks, "Why Can't I Touch It"
- The Beatles, "Come Together"
- Regina Spektor and The Strokes, "Modern Girls & Old Fashion Men"
- Blur, "Beetlebum"
- Blonde Redhead, "Maddening Cloud"
- Radiohead, "The Bends"
- Jurassic 5, "A Day at the Races"
- Weezer, "Undone—The Sweater Song"
- The Walkmen, "Thinking of a Dream I Had"
- Night Ranger, "Sister Christian"
- The Police, "So Lonely"

Christopher (of *Malcolm in the Middle*) has been dating Laura Prepon for so long that "she's basically my sister," he says. It's only Grace (who recently scored a breakout role in the film *In Good Company*) for whom he doesn't have such familial feelings. "He and I don't have a lot in common, so I don't really enjoy hanging out with him outside of work," Masterson says. "At work, it's fine. We say hello."

Unlike many of his fellow practitioners, Masterson makes no attempt to disguise the fact that he is a Scientologist. "I'd be a flaming crackhead if I didn't study Scientology," he says of the controversial religion. "Basically, any aspect of your life where there's concern or issues, there's something in Scientology where you can go and have it not be a problem anymore." For example, Masterson says he used to be introverted in groups. "I did a course that took me two weeks, and I've never thought about it since."



Daniel, you're a star: in *Beethoven's 2nd* (at age 17), in a *CHiPs* parody on *MAD TV* (with Valderrama), and on *That '70s Show* with Mila Kunis (in fat suit)

He politely but firmly dismisses any suggestion that the church, founded by the late sci-fi writer L. Ron Hubbard, is a cult. "A cult is a secret society," Masterson says. "There's nothing secret about Scientology."

On his way out of the restaurant, Masterson stops to greet *The West Wing*'s Dulé Hill with a hug, but when he reaches the parking valet, he is suddenly antsy, realizing that his radio show is scheduled to go on the air in less than half an hour. For just a moment, a look of concern breaks through his composed facade. "I'm a professional," Masterson says before he hops into his black Range Rover and hits the gas.

When Masterson reaches the Indie 103.1 studios, housed in a skyscraper on Wilshire Boulevard, his *Feel My Heat* cohort, Brent Bolthouse, is already waiting for him. Bolthouse, the 35-year-old nightlife impresario (who manages a weekly party of his own at the Concorde in Hollywood, as well as the Dave Navarro/Matt Sorum side project Camp Freddy), used to work the 10 P.M.-to-midnight shift on Mondays alone until one fateful night last summer, when Masterson made a guest appearance. "He came in and it was magical," Bolthouse says. "We fell in love. We spooned all week." (Translation: The two hit it off, and Bolthouse suggested that Masterson come back the following Monday with some CDs of his own.)

Decorated with show flyers and promotional posters—NEVER MIND THE CORP RADIO reads one Sex Pistols-inspired design—the one-room headquarters has a collegiate mood that perfectly suits Masterson, whose musical tastes can be summarized thusly: "A person who doesn't listen to Radiohead should be shot dead." Most of his picks tonight (see sidebar) can be seen as an extension of this philosophy, except for when he slips in Night Ranger's "Sister Christian." "That's where we like to invalidate the hipsters," Masterson says.

In recent months, it had been rumored that the current season of *That '70s Show* would be its last, and though the series has since been renewed for at least one more year (without Grace and Kutcher, who are departing), Masterson says he isn't fearful for his post-'70s career. "I probably should be," he says. "I would be perfectly happy to do independent films the rest of my life, because I don't need cash. I figured I'd have that opportunity at the age of 40 or 50, and I have that opportunity at 29." If nothing else, another year of '70s means more time to focus on his club night, his radio show, and the guest spot he'll soon be taping for HBO's *Entourage*. Maybe he'll also figure out what he really wants to do with his life. "Doing *That '70s Show*," he says, "I've been playing a character who is not like me, but who is so easy to do. I've definitely slacked off the last seven years."

## The Me Too Decade

Who'll take over on *That '70s Show* once Topher Grace and Ashton Kutcher leave the cast? We've got a few groovy suggestions.



*The Simple Life*'s celebutante **PARIS HILTON** joins the cast as spoiled heiress San Diego Ramada, a mixed-up rich girl who's readjusting to society following the years she spent as a hostage of the Symbionese Liberation Army and that embarrassing home video she recorded one drunken night with *Hogan's Heroes* star Bob Crane.



Filling the void left by the absence of Michael Kaelo, *The Lord of the Rings*' dreamy **ORLANDO BLOOM** steps in as Sidney, a spiky-haired British expatriate who aspires to learn the bass guitar and run off with Mila Kunis to shoot heroin in a shabby New York City hotel room.



Moving into Eric Forman's bedroom is **FRED SAVAGE's** character, Kevin, a once-adorable moppet who came of age in the late 1960s, but who has since been haunted by the delusion that his every move is being narrated by that guy who played the tall burglar in *Home Alone*.



Acclaimed character actor and Oscar winner **CHRISTOPHER WALKEN** is Nick, a steelworker who lost our national innocence in the Vietnam War. Now he's back, and there's an exciting game of chance he learned in a POW camp that he can't wait to share with the rest of the gang. Anyone got a pistol?



Now that Fez has had seven years to learn American customs and the language, who's better qualified to take his place as the resident fish-out-of-water than **JAR JAR BINKS**, that loveable pidgin English-speaking Gungan from the planet Naboo? Me-sa smell a spin-off!

# April 05

# 01

While Flavor Flav offers his baby-making skills to Brigitte Nielsen, his Public Enemy cohort Chuck D remains devoted to more socially responsible causes. Today, Chuck delivers the keynote address at the inaugural Hip Hop World Summit in Paris, cosponsored by that rap-loving global body the United Nations. Also on the agenda: MC'ing workshops, panel discussions on graffiti, and a letter-writing campaign urging Fox to bring back *Method & Red*.

Everything else you need to do, see, hear, and throw cow chips at this month



Yankees/Red Sox rivalry, which officially resumes as the star-crossed teams meet in the first game of the Major League Baseball season. You can also start lining up at your multiplex for the April 15 opening of *Fever Pitch*, which recasts Nick Hornby's memoir about soccer enthusiasts as a comedy about baseball fans (strike one!) directed by the Farrelly brothers (strike two!) and starring Jimmy Fallon (strike three!).

Remember back in October when our divided nation seemed to be on the brink of collapse? No, it wasn't due to the presidential election (who won that again?), but because of the



# 12

Put yourself to work with Todd Oldham's

new book, *Handmade Modern*, in which the celebrity designer coughs up 72 painless do-it-yourself projects, including the Patchwork Stripe Curtain, which gives "the illusion of being a pass-through to a whole gallery of imaginary rooms." Whether you let imaginary people live in those rooms is up to you.



It's almost certainly a criminal offense on the other 364 days of the year, but tossing animal poop at Beaver, Oklahoma's 36th annual World Cow Chip Throwing Contest will earn you prizes and the respect of your fellow competitors. Don't forget your gloves.



What would it be like to spend a decade with Wayne Coyne, and how many of your brain cells would be left when it was over? Director Bradley Beesley's documentary *The Fearless Freaks*, available on DVD, allows you to experience ten years alongside the Flaming Lips in the span of about 99 minutes, complete with new songs, cameo appearances by Meg and Jack White, footage of a band member shooting heroin—and lots and lots of plushies.



PBS may no longer be the place to see animated rabbits cavorting with same-sex couples, but for at least one night, it's the home of punk. The network that gave us *Antiques Roadshow* and *The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer* broadcasts Jim Fields and Michael Gramaglia's documentary *End of the Century: The Ramones*, a comprehensive look at the New York rock pioneers and the feud that Joey and Johnny took to their graves. Promise not to tell anyone in the Bush cabinet that it's on TV, okay?



# 30

By cosmological coincidence, it's the birthday of Willie Nelson (who turns 72), Kristen Dunst (23), and the MC5's Wayne Kramer (57). So roll up a fattie, slap on a cheerleading outfit, and kick out the jams, motherfucker!

**Dear Ketel One Drinker**  
**Please excuse us for interrupting**  
**your read, but needs must.**



## The Bad Seed

After cracking cases as teen detective Veronica Mars, Kristen Bell is cracking whips as a good girl corrupted by *Reefer Madness*

By Phoebe Reilly

Photograph by Patrick Fraser

### THE SLEUTH IS OUT THERE

Few people recall their high school days fondly, but Kristen Bell had no clue how miserable the experience could be before she landed the title role on *Veronica Mars*. "When I read the script for the pilot, I thought, 'My God, this girl cannot catch a break,'" says the 24-year-old actress. In the UPN series, the once-popular Veronica is exiled from the in crowd and becomes a private eye to solve her best friend's murder and her own sexual assault. Although Bell's formative years were not nearly this traumatic, the Detroit native does share her character's aptitude for getting into trouble. "I did my fair share of partying growing up, but I was always so nervous about it that I covered my tracks really well," she says. "The show has made me even more paranoid because I know how easy it is to get dirt on people. I'm shredding all my mail and keeping an eye on my purse."

### TANNING SALON

This month, Bell finds herself on the other side of the law in the musical comedy *Reefer Madness* (debuting April 16 on Showtime). Reprising her role from the Off-Broadway satire of the 1936 propaganda film-turned-cult classic, Bell stars as Mary Lane, a goody-goody who develops a bondage fetish as a result of smoking pot. And just in case her parents are reading this, Bell would like to add that she has no expertise when it comes to the demon weed ("I didn't really know what marijuana was until I got to college," she says. "I was very naive as a kid") nor with playing a convincing dominatrix. "I was walking around with a whip, trying to look sexy in these four-inch heels and moving my hips around," she says, "but really I was just going, 'Don't fall over.'"

### GIRLS GONE MILD

Though she's rapidly cornered the market on imperiled-youth roles (including an unforgettable turn as an orphan/hooker/con artist on HBO's *Deadwood*), Bell says there's a personal satisfaction she finds in portraying impossibly articulate innocents like Veronica Mars. "It counters my real personality, which tends to be very bubbly and normal and, well, I don't want to say lame," she says, without quite finishing that sentence. "It might not be realistic that Veronica is this witty and sarcastic," says Bell, "but when I look back at my day and think, 'Damn, I wish I had said that!' the cool thing is that Veronica always does."



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# School of Smart Rock

Think you know the Soft Boys from *The Soft Bulletin*? Roky Erickson from Roxy Music? A new book of rock minutiae is still way more clever than you are.

By Frank Halperin

Illustration by Mark Todd

If you're tired of having sand kicked in your face by pompous hipsters with all-knowing pop-music chops, *The Rock Snob's Dictionary: An Essential Lexicon of Rockological Knowledge* can make you an intimidating fountain of arcane rock'n'roll wisdom, too. Based on their *Vanity Fair* features, David Kamp and Steven Daly have compiled an Alt.country-to-Zoso reference that defines every obscure icon and overused term in the rock canon. Not sure if you're a snob or a slob? Find out with this quiz, distilled from the authors' comically ego-deflating definitions:

**1** The "late-blooming Oklahoma-based rock group" whose "melodious quasi-concept albums" have turned their "adorable, prematurely gray" frontman into "the Justin Timberlake of the Volvo-owning set" are:

- A The Polyphonic Spree
- B The Flaming Lips
- C Mercury Rev
- D The Butthole Surfers

**2** Which "diminutive, seemingly mute" performer, after his band's demise in 1968, "proved so itinerant and noncommittal" that his name "became a Snob catchphrase for forsaking one's status as esteemed guitarist in a fine pop group for an uncertain, unfocused afterlife"?

- A John Squire
- B Bernard Butler
- C Johnny Marr
- D Graham Coxon

**3** The "hulking, dreadlocked Jamaican expat known to all Snobs as the true originator of hip-hop, predating even the Kangol-capped DJs and MCs of the genre's old school," who got his start spinning at Bronx block parties in the early '70s, is:

- A Jam Master Jay
- B Kool DJ Herc
- C Afrika Bambaataa
- D MC Hammer



**4** Who's the "self-consciously difficult Chicago-based record producer" who "pushes the bounds of hard-rock iconoclasm by wearing glasses and having short hair" while enhancing "his outsider cred by playing guitar in not-very-good hardcore bands"?

- A Steve Albini
- B Rick Rubin
- C Todd Rundgren
- D Robert John "Mutt" Lange

**5** Which "sad-sack, compulsively muted English singer/songwriter" from a "posh background" was "canonized by Rock Snobs for the three plaintive, delicately wrought albums he recorded before dying, an apparent suicide, in 1974 at the age of 26," and was "frequently photographed standing dolefully among trees"?

- A Nik Cohn
- B Nick Drake
- C Nick Cave
- D Nic Cage

**6** Who's the "aggressively queeny black disco singer of the late '70s" deemed by "dance-music Snobs and queer theorists as the spangly materfamilias of modern hedonistic club culture," and whose "hefty backing singers, Martha Wash and Izora Rhodes, later scored their own gay disco hit as the Weather Girls with 'It's Raining Men'"?

- A Sylvester
- B RuPaul
- C Little Richard
- D Isaac Hayes

**7** Name the "white-maned impresario of epic schlock-rock," known for being "obsessed, like Phil Spector, with the cathedral-esque sonic ambition of Richard Wagner's music," and whom "Courtney Love has praised as 'a genius'"?

- A Paul Williams
- B Randy Newman
- C Brian Wilson
- D Jim Steinman

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Space oddities: Marilyn Manson (right) and the bad-tempered aliens of *Area 51*



## Bother From Another Planet

As the irritable extraterrestrial of *Area 51*, Marilyn Manson wants to get under your skin *By John Sellers*

The idea of Marilyn Manson playing a disgruntled, opinionated space alien is so perfect that it's hard to believe it hasn't happened until now. So give credit to Midway Games for casting *The Golden Age of Grotesque's* gothic rocker as the ornery narrator of *Area 51*, a conspiracy-laden shooter based on the arcade classic. In the PS2 and Xbox update, Manson supplies the voice of Edgar the Gray Alien, who guides the game's hero (*The X-Files'* David Duchovny) through the infamous government research facility in Roswell, New Mexico—one that's now teeming with angry ETs. From planet Earth, we probed Manson about his alien encounter.

**Your character in *Area 51* is called Edgar the Gray Alien. Couldn't you come up with a more frightening name?** I'm a fan of Poe, so I like the name, actually. He's supposed to be the narrator and a helping hand, but he does it in a real nasty way. He's very condescending to the players and talks about them as if they were monkeys.

**Now that sounds like you.** He was easy to get into because we share common feelings about mankind. He's a misanthrope. Obviously, living the life of an alien myself, it's a good character for me. He's an antihero—you like him, but you're not supposed to. He's somewhere between the Grinch and Hunter S. Thompson. Ridiculous in a scary way, like if Phyllis Diller were a vampire.

**Do you believe that *Area 51* is real?** It's easy for me to believe in government cover-ups of anything, particularly after Columbine and all the unanswered questions in Littleton. There was a kind of unspoken weirdness—

you never saw the two killers' parents, and their autopsies weren't released, and stuff like that.

**Have you ever been mistaken for an alien?** I do remember the best alien-related comment anyone ever made about me—aside from being called Michael Jackson when I was coming out of a movie theater once. Someone said, "If the ancient Egyptians and the Nazis created a rock star in outer space and sent him back in time to destroy the world, it would be Marilyn Manson." I thought that was quite amusing.

**Wait—someone once mistook you for Michael Jackson?** Yeah, I had on a black fedora and was in a hurry to get out of the theater, and a large black woman exclaimed, "That's Michael Jackson!"

**Did you just get the hell out of there?** Yeah. I figured it's not going to work out good no matter what. I didn't want to wait to find out.

**If you were ever to meet an alien, what do you think it would look like?** Well, I've never seen *E.T.*, but I wouldn't be happy if it looked like that. I'm more into the *Earth Girls Are Easy* kind of alien.

**Do you think there's intelligent life elsewhere in the universe?** I'm still not convinced there's intelligent life on Earth. Something like the Bible or Jesus or angels probably have some correlation to aliens. The Ascension and the flying with the wings? There's gotta be aliens involved. Or it's a gay musical.





# **BAD NIGHT? GOOD MORNING.**

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## Gleaming the Tube

Only a savant could turn the brain-dead output of the idiot box into the bootleg genius of *TV Cabbage* *By Brian Raftery*

Like most television addicts, Derrick Beckles pines for the medium's golden age, when shows like *A Current Affair* and Fabio's *Acapulco Heat* ruled the airwaves. That's just the sort of craptacular fare he mines for *TV Cabbage*, his bootleg home-video series in which he distills all the strangest clips he can find—late-night infomercials, local-access religious programs, and lots and lots of C-list celebrity scandal—into one continuous, hypnotic loop.

"I'm kind of a divining rod for shit," says Beckles, a 34-year-old Toronto-based music-video director who has shot clips for Melissa Auf der Maur and Canadian glomsters Uncut. "I'll turn on the TV, and there'll be something insane on, like a dog juggling a midget." Since the early '90s, he's always kept a blank cassette in the VCR, waiting to record some sort of pop-culture oddity, whether it's an animated re-creation of the Princess Di car crash or a mid-'80s jazzercise clip.

A typical *TV Cabbage* DVD tends to be haphazard and frenetic, with plenty of Gary Coleman footage, but it's not always as random as it seems: A badly rapped Burger King ad juxtaposed with

a segment of Snoop Dogg being interviewed by Donny Osmond makes a subtle point about the commercialization of hip-hop, and a comically outdated report on moshing pokes fun at the mainstream's off-the-mark interpretations of punk rock.

Beckles never set out to be a lo-fi Marshall McLuhan. "The first tape I did was done using two VCRs, lying in my living room on the floor for a week, popping painkillers," he says. These days he says the pickings have become increasingly slim: Tongue-in-cheek soap operas like *Passions* are too self-aware, and reality programs are too easy targets. But thanks to shows like *Celebrity Justice*—which harkens back to "the shameless days of whoring out any star for any reason"—he's found plenty of fodder for his latest collection, *Sore for Slighted Eyes* (available at his website, [tv cabbage.com](http://tv cabbage.com)). And as much as he loathes the famous, his public screenings of *Cabbage* have attracted such notable fans as Johnny Knoxville and Anne Heche. "She said, 'Oh, I can't wait to see me!'" says Beckles. "I was like, 'You little megalomaniac!'"



A random sampling of the curios, game shows, and lame-os who populate *TV Cabbage*

## The Spin 20 04.05

OF	LAST MONTH	THIS MONTH	ARTIST/TITLE	MONTHS ON CHART
1	1	1	WHEN MICHAEL JACKSON BRAGS HE'S GOING TO GET OFF SCOTT FREE UNFORTUNATELY, SCOTT FREE IS A 14-YEAR-OLD BOY	47
17	2	2	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS, CLOSET HOMOSEXUAL WE ALWAYS ASSUMED HE WAS A FEMININE SPONGE	16
10	3	3	DONATING TO A TSUNAMI RELIEF FUND BECAUSE TOTAL REQUEST LIVE TOLD YOU TO SELFLESS	3
7	4	4	NICK LACHEY'S SOLO REALITY SHOW THE MOST LAUGHS YOU'LL HAVE WATCHING A MAN CONSULT HIS DIVORCE ATTORNEYS	21
1	5	5	GETTING ROOFIED BY BILL COSBY COME TO THINK OF IT, HE WAS AWFULLY PUSHY WITH THOSE JELL-O PUDDING POPS	51
22	6	6	BRITNEY SPEARS SHILLING FOR PROACTIV SOLUTION DOES HOME-GIRL HAVE TO COP ALL HER MOVES FROM JUDITH LIGHT?	66
7	7	7	THE BREAKUP OF THE NEPALESE GOVERNMENT DAMN YOU, ANGELINA JOLIE	1
11	8	8	BOB POLLARD'S PORN SOUNDTRACK (HE STILL CALL IT UNDER THE BUSHES UNDER THE STARS?)	25
9	9	9	DITCHING PUDDLE OF MUDD TO JOIN 3 DOORS DOWN LIKE QUITTING YOUR DAY JOB AT HARGE'S TO WORK THE NIGHT SHIFT AT JACK IN THE BOX	14
8	10	10	HOW TO TELL IF YOU'RE PART OF THE PSYCH-ROCK SCENE YOU'RE IN A BAND, AND YOUR FANS TAKE DRUGS	37
13	11	11	THE SUBTLETY OF SPANISH TABLOIDS ¿QUIEN ES UNA LESBIANA?	7
12	12	12	DESPERATELY NEEDING A PLAY-STATION PORTABLE SO THIS IS THE EMOTION YOU HUMANS CALL "LOVE"	5
25	13	13	PETE DOHERTY FREED THIS JUST IN: PETE DOHERTY ARRESTED	81
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# The Trying Game

Working at being cool is never cool

By Chuck Klosterman  
Illustration by Nathan Fox

It doesn't seem necessary for me to criticize Ashlee Simpson, mostly because there are enough people doing that already. I'm also unsure what the point of such criticism would be, since attacking Ashlee Simpson's artistic legitimacy is like criticizing Michael Jackson for being an unconventional father. However, I've come to realize something about Simpson that explains why so many people don't like her, and it has nothing to do with the music she is (or isn't) lip-synching to. Ashlee Simpson has a larger problem: She tries too hard.

People booed Ashlee Simpson when she performed at the Orange Bowl's halftime show, and if polled, I'm sure the crowd in that stadium would say they booed because her singing was terrible. But this doesn't really make sense. Halftime performances at sporting events are almost always terrible, yet audiences rarely express displeasure. The reason they booed this time was that Ashlee Simpson looked ridiculous. She was

dressed like Karen O, almost as if she was trying to front a Yeah Yeah Yeahs tribute band. Now, I'm sure that specific comparison did not occur to most of the people in Pro Player Stadium; 90 percent of the 72,000 people who watched USC play Oklahoma wouldn't know Karen O from Terrell Owens. Yet one thing was obvious to them: Whomever Ashlee Simpson was trying to be was not who Ashlee Simpson is. She looked like someone desperately trying to give the world what she thought it wanted—an edgier Simpson sister.

A few days after the Orange Bowl, I saw the video for Simpson's "La La." In one segment, she wears a vintage Adam and the Ants T-shirt; later, she wears a Mötley Crüe shirt. I suppose it's theoretically possible that Ashlee Simpson honestly likes those bands. But within the context of this video, her identification with them does not feel remotely organic; it feels like somebody put a lot of thought into whom Ashlee should align herself with. All young artists do this, but some are less subtle than others. I once saw singer/songwriter Leona Naess perform in Cleveland wearing a ZZ Top shirt. "I don't even know who this band is," she said between songs. "I just like this shirt." Naess played Minneapolis on the same tour, but this time she wore an Aerosmith T-shirt. "I don't even know who this band is," she said between songs. "I just like this shirt." Obviously, this was an attempt at cultural positioning: Leona Naess wanted to appear like the kind of girl who (somehow) had never heard of ZZ Top and Aerosmith, just as Ashlee Simpson wants to appear like the kind of girl who's intimately aware of Mötley Crüe and Adam Ant. Yet both artists failed in their attempts, and that's because even a child could tell

they were trying way too hard. And people hate that.

Oddly, this is not true in almost every other aspect of life. People don't love Minnesota Timberwolves forward Kevin Garnett because he makes the game look easy; they like him because he makes the game look hard. Modern athletes who make things look easy (like Garnett's neighbor Randy Moss) are usually seen as cancers. It took James Joyce 17 years to finish *Finnegans Wake*, and that's what makes it a classic; filmmakers such as Stanley Kubrick and Orson Welles are likewise lauded for having been obsessive, workaholic perfectionists. Usually, Americans love people who expend ample effort to achieve their goals.

But this is not true for musicians.

Because rock is so tied to the abstract concept of "cool," it seems distasteful when anyone tries too much. Bands that are unpolished and lazy (the Replacements, Pavement, Motörhead) are always more likable than groups that do "whatever it takes" to achieve a modicum of success (Bon Jovi, Jimmy Eat World, Flickerstick). In fact, not caring can actually make an artist seem smarter: Bob Pollard and Ryan Adams are both regarded as sublimely talented songwriters because they're wildly prolific and never spend too long on any one project; because they never seem to overtly care about anything in particular, it's assumed that their records would be awesome if they did.

And you know what's even crazier? If Ashlee Simpson somehow sees this column, she'll worry that I might be right about all this, and she'll work extremely hard at proving she never works at anything. And this will fail, too. It's hard enough to be good at something: You have to be really great in order to seem good by accident. ■



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# NIGHT FALLS

# ON MANHATTAN

In the city that never sleeps, unless it's knocked out cold, four men are making their gloriously gloomy racket fashionable while indulging in fine dining, goth cuties, and trips to the tailor.

**Welcome to the fabulous, decadent world of Interpol.**

By Brian Raftery

Photographs by

Pieter M. van Hattem





**Paul Banks**  
While most guests were distracted by the arrival of the Scottish equestrian team, he was transfixed by the zebra's surprising striptease

f, by some improbable twist of fate, you ever get the chance to join Interpol, it might seriously be worth considering. The hours may be a bit harsh—it's a reverse 9 to 5, not including band meetings and tailor appointments—but there's probably no better gig going at the moment: The wine is free and free-flowing, the girlfriends are beautiful, and there's a good chance Robert Smith will play poker with you in the back of your tour bus (he'll win, but it's only a \$20 buy-in). ■ Plus, there are endless little dishes of gelato. It is only a few hours after Interpol's performance of "Evil" (from their sophomore album, *Antics*) on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, and to celebrate, their label, Matador, has shuttled them to the schmancy downtown Manhattan restaurant Otto. Seated at a long table, three-fourths

of Interpol—singer/guitarist Paul Banks, guitarist Daniel Kessler, and drummer Sam Fogarino—and several friends and family members are sampling delicately presented scoops of Italian ice cream; notably absent is bassist Carlos D., who is home, cleaning his bathroom.

It's like a corporate-carded, indie-rock Last Supper, and yet Banks, sitting at the center, is frowning, a glass of red and a glass of white both within his grasp. Though his band just played to millions of people, he is bummed, convinced his vocals were off-key (they were at the beginning, but he picked up by the chorus). It appears that *none* of the Interpolers are having the same sort of night: Sam seems jubilant, but Daniel looks as though he's been ready to leave since he sat down. You get the sense that if it weren't for the common goal of turning Interpol from indie-rock contenders into mainstream conquerors, it would be hard to imagine them sharing a cab ride home, much less a band.

Such is the *modus operandi* of Interpol. Fogarino describes the four's symbiosis as "same book, different pages," and, though he's referring to their famously sharp fashion sense, he could very well have been referring to their personalities, which, in reductive thumbnails, go something like this: introvert (Kessler), stoic (Banks), sage (Fogarino), and hedonist (Carlos D.). "Democracy," Banks says, "is the only way to keep the four of us in a room."



None more black: Interpol's first publicity photo, from 2000



only a few years ago, the very notion of an indie band happily indulging in the perks of their ascending stardom would have been considered a breach of faith: you'd never find Stephen Malkmus, say, trading barbs with a sommelier. But Interpol's appeal has always been that while their music sounds fairly pained, they make being in a band look like a good time—the sort of good time you can only have when your tie stays on till dawn and your Jameson-on-the-rocks miraculously keeps refilling itself.

"When Daniel was putting together the band, he wasn't looking for someone who had the same musical interests," Carlos D. tells me later. "He wanted to use other sorts of clues—demeanor, style, attitude, words. Which are very good ways to judge someone."

Of course, such an emphasis on presentation would make these guys seem like major-league posers if they didn't have the tunes to back it up. So they spent nearly four years writing and practicing before finally coming to the attention of Matador. "I saw them open for Arab Strap," says label co-owner Chris Lombardi. "I was like, 'Whatever these guys are doing, they're doing it really well.' They had their shit together." But it wasn't exactly one of those get-me-their-manager-now epiphanies: "I listened to a few songs," Lombardi says, "and then went downstairs for drinks."

It took about a year for Matador to sober up and sign them. By then, Interpol had been playing the same set of songs around the city, most of which would appear on their 2002 debut album, *Turn on the Bright Lights*. Meticulously fusing British post-punk murk with Stateside, big-guitar brio, it was instant, urgent stuff, and Banks' lyrics were dramatic yet distant—"PDA" could have been about unapologetic canoodling or a Palm Pilot (probably neither). Alas, his deep bellow meant that Interpol would draw innumerable comparisons to a certain Manchester group.

"They got that rap early on for being derivative of Joy Division," says former Hüsker Dü and Sugar frontman Bob Mould, who's working on a remix of *Antics* "Length of Love." "But I always thought they sounded more like a real specific time period: the spring of 1980. It reminded me of a time when so much good stuff was coming out of the U.K." (That would be Echo & the Bunnymen and any band mentioned in the first 45 minutes of *24 Hour Party People*.)

*Bright Lights* was a slow-burn success; it only passed the 300,000 mark last year (in the U.K., where the band played some of their first big shows, sales were swifter). By the time *Antics* was released last September, Interpol had spent nearly 16 months on the road, includ-





**Sam Fogarino**  
He never expected  
his girlfriend to  
take the "Hey Ya!"  
lyrics so literally



**Daniel Kessler**  
Though thrilled to be wearing his favorite suit, he cursed Carlos D. for pouring glue into his pocket

ing a high-profile slot on last year's *Curiosa* tour, and their reputation was growing, both as a live act when onstage and as live wires when not. "We all have healthy appetites," says Banks. "I'm sure we're not particularly decadent in comparison to other bands, but maybe we are. It's not something that I'm gonna tout."

This year, there will be many opportunities for the band to test the limits of their democracy—especially when it comes time to determine who'll release their next album. *Antics* sold 350,000 in its first four months, and once the current two-month tour finishes, it could be Matador's first gold record since Liz Phair's *Whip-Smart* in 1998; it will also be the last album on Interpol's contract. "There's a lot of pressure from other labels that want to sign the band," says Lombardi. Negotiations will not be fun. From his first sit-down with the band, Lombardi says, "they weren't looking to us for advice or to steer them in the right direction. They were on their way anyway."

**T**he story of Interpol begins with Kessler, and it only could have happened in New York City—a place where disparate outcasts meet up, bond, and go halvesies on a rehearsal-space deposit every 40 seconds. But it has little to do with the alleged new-rock revolution that took place here in the late '90s. If the hyperbolic press were to be believed, you could have wandered into Brownies on any given night and played beer pong with Julian Casablancas and Karen O, while the Walkmen fiddled with a subway map at the end of the bar.

"People romanticized the scene," says Kessler, "but it was inaccurate. If a band from around here could sell out Brownies or the Mercury Lounge, it was like, 'Whoa.' People in New York City weren't really into us." (A few weeks after he tells me this, Interpol would sell out two nights at the fabled Radio City Music Hall.)

Kessler, 30, grew up for a while in France. He wears a suit all the time, speaks quietly and thoughtfully, and as he plops into a corner of a crowded East Village bar, sipping his whiskey, it's hard to imagine him otherwise. Even if, by the time he got to New York University, he was a baggy-pants skate punk.

"He was very ambitious," remembers Greg Drudy, Interpol's original drummer, who left the band in 2000. "He always knew what he wanted to do, and it was always his band." Kessler had yearned for a guitar ever since he heard U2's *The Unforgettable Fire* as a kid; but even though he had written a handful of songs, he could never find the right cohorts to flesh them out. Frustrated, he recorded an early demo by himself and jammed with Drudy, until he spotted a tall, Doc Martens-sporting guy in his philosophy class. Just before Kessler dropped the course, he walked up to Carlos D. and asked him if he happened to play an instrument. "I had a feeling, like it was an electric force," he says. "He was dressed in a very similar way that he's dressed now. I wasn't the most confident kid, [and] I think I was pretty much at the point of being broken. I was sad about not being able to express this part of me."

No one in the band can quite explain why Kessler ached so much to play music (when asked, Fogarino taps his heart). Some people just hear U2 and decide they need to be in a band and spend their lives trying to find others to play with. Paul Banks isn't one of those people.



**A**s far as New York City winters go, there is cold, and then there is the *holyfuckwhatamidoinghere?* kind of cold that hits in mid-January—a sinus-tightening snap so defeating, even the most adventurous urbanites retreat inside. On those nights, the streets look empty, like the Rapture swept through (the catastrophic biblical event, not the band), leaving behind only a few nicotine-needy souls panting on the corner.

The night after Interpol's *Letterman* appearance is such an embittering evening, and so the International Bar in the East Village is pretty dead, except for the guy with the black ski cap leaning over the numerous empty glasses in front of him. "Yeah, I called you fat," he drawls, then waits a beat. "Look at me—I'm skinny. It never stopped me from getting busy."

Yes, Paul Banks is doing the Humpty Hump. Actually, he's not doing it so much as dissecting it—reeling off lyrics in a deadpan monotone.

"The Humpty Dance" was one of the first pieces of music Banks ever memorized, along with Golden Earring's "Twilight Zone," Aerosmith's "Dream On," and the entire *Straight Outta Compton* album. The guy's 26, meaning he grew up at a time when hip-hop and rock were on equal footing. His parents were obsessed with Yes, and that can screw you up for life.

Banks loves the International Bar. Last summer, he and a dozen friends organized the International 13, in which they consumed all 13 brews on the beer list in six hours. An egg timer was used; com-



memorative T-shirts were made up. "It was a little fratty," he admits.

Even with a few drinks in him, Banks remains guarded. "He has to feel you out really well before he opens up," says Jason Baron, who co-owns the Dark Room, a Lower East Side bar Banks and Carlos D. haunt. "But he does, after a few beers." Sometimes, not even that can defrost him. "The entire time I was in the band, I didn't even have his phone number," says ex-drummer Drudy. "Even though I practiced with him three times a week for almost two years, on a personal level, I didn't really know him."

The truth is Banks would like nothing more than to cultivate an air of mystery; it's why he refuses to explain his lyrics or divulge personal details that are easily Googled. At times it feels like he's trying a little too hard—no one who quotes Digital Underground and chugs beer after beer on a bar patio can be *that* difficult to crack.

Banks grew up in Spain and England; he's still a British citizen, despite having lived in New York City since 1996. He has no complaints about his high school years, when he wrote songs and played guitar. Kessler met him in France, but it wasn't until they bumped into each other in the East Village, where Banks was also attending NYU, that they talked about collaborating. "I never had the inclination to work with anybody else, because nobody else was doing anything better than what I was doing," Banks says. "Daniel was the first person I met who wrote original material I liked. I felt I could contribute to it."

At the band's initial rehearsals, Banks was so unsure of his singing, he'd do it quietly into the microphone. When it came to discussing the band's future, though, he had no problem raising his voice. "Carlos and I really butted heads in the beginning," he says. "That was a constant thing, because we have utterly contradictory personalities. He's got a real sense of identity and a responsibility to uphold his identity. Socially, I was more willing to bend to include other people's perspectives. Now we're really tight, in a spiritual way."

For Banks, the group's bonds were solidified when they took their first extended road trip, hopping in a van for 30 days, taking turns with the CD player. "That was a huge perk for that first tour: smoking a doobie, hearing Jesus Lizard for the first time while driving through Wisconsin at 2 P.M. on a summer day." Just a few months earlier, he had been working at a café, an intentional step down from his job doing data entry, which was an intentional step down from his gig as an editorial assistant at *Interview* magazine; the less he engaged himself in work, he reasoned, the more he would be forced to make music his career. "I was a horrible interviewer," he recalls. "Damon Dash once called me on it: 'You don't know anything about me, do you?'"

It's one of the few times Banks laughs, and it's hard not to sense that he's reining it in, knowing that people expect him to be as tense and oblique as his lyrics. But what was once intended for projection is now meant for protection. "I'm getting used to the nuisances I didn't anticipate," he says. "The fact that you're comment-worthy to people online. I don't read anything, but I unfortunately hear about stuff."

He's talking about the partying. It's understood that he and Carlos D. are the more indulgent members of Interpol, a reputation he and the band's handlers have tried to play down. "The decadent

aspects of [touring] are regrettable," he says. "You can't talk about it without it sounding hollow. What am I going to say? 'Yeah, me and Bright Eyes and Isaac from Modest Mouse were doing blow off a model's ass? You'd be like...'—he makes a disgusted face—"Really?" (He quickly adds, "I've never met those guys, whom I admire greatly.")

It's well past midnight now, and we've done enough shots and dropped enough jukebox quarters to call it a night.

"You wanna shoot some pool?" Banks asks.

We head over to the nearly empty Cherry Tavern, a few blocks away, where Banks is friendly with the two bartenders. As *An American Werewolf in London* plays on the TV, Banks proceeds to whup everyone in the house, pacing around the table with his stick, still wearing his ski cap. Long after last call, he decides to hang around for a bit, huddling conspiratorially with his pals at the end of the bar. The night, apparently, is not over yet.



few days later, Sam Fogarino is combing through the racks at Other Music, using store credit to pick up some CDs for the group's imminent weeklong jaunt to Japan. He is the only Interpol member who volunteers to meet up during the day, and in fact shows up a half-hour early.

In the mid-'90s, Fogarino used to work at record stores in Miami—a good gig, but one that was secondary to playing with his punk band, the Holy Terrors. "I actually lost my favorite record-store job because I couldn't make it in on time," he says. The place opened at noon.

Fogarino is 36, and he knows people think that's old. "What's really rubbed me the wrong way," he says half-kidding, "[are articles that say,] 'You gotta root for that guy. He came from the inner city, and he didn't go to college, and good for him. He's just happy to be here.'"

Fogarino grew up in hard-ass West Philadelphia; after his parents split, his mother worked a number of jobs, even bartending at a mob hangout. "There were a couple of points in life that weren't so smooth,"



**Carlos D.**  
"Hello, Crispin, it's me, Carlos. Listen, I was wondering if you'd be up for a double date."



**The Boys in the Band**

Clockwise from left: Carlos D. on his first day of kindergarten; he throws devil horns during Christmas 1987; Fogarino plays his first kit in 1973

he admits. Perhaps because he has the benefit of perspective, Fogarino comes off as the most well-adjusted of the bunch. "Not many years ago, I was a lot more fiery," he says. "I raised my voice a lot. And [the others] were like, 'No, we *talk* in this band.' I mean, look at where I come from and where Daniel and Paul came from. That's a fucking sitcom. And I don't mean that like, 'Those guys are smarter than me and I'm a dumb-ass.' I dropped out of high school, but I didn't stop reading."

Fogarino moved to New York City in 1997, eventually becoming a partner in a used-clothing and -record store in Brooklyn. Kessler was at an indie label, and when he finally asked Fogarino to join in 2000, the drummer was close to retiring from music. "When we first started touring, I went nuts," Fogarino says. "[I indulged] full force, more than anybody in the band knows. I was quiet about it. It was kind of typical: Married man goes out on the road with band that gets signed, comes back divorced. I tested it out, I took a taste to see how it works, and it's too costly. Emotionally, physically, and financially."



**C**arlos D. has had a lot of rough mornings, and many of them were spent in Arizona. "On the touring route, it's where you usually wind up after being in California," he says, "and when I go out to Los Angeles, and then to San Francisco, I have a lot of friends to party with. So by the time I get to Arizona, I'm like *unnnnnh*." He shakes his head and makes a queasy face.

We're in a taxi, heading to a Mexican restaurant, and at the rate he's chattering, we could travel from Manhattan to Long Island and still barely cover his high school days in suburban New Jersey, where he was dragged by his German mother and Colombian father, both now-retired clerical workers. There is nothing he does not want to talk about, and it clearly pains him when he has to go off the record.

In Manhattan, Carlos D. has a visibility that's matched only by the Chrysler Building, Moby, and guys who look like Moby. He's *always* out. Carlos D. sightings are legend: "I saw Carlos D. eating a taco by himself" or "I saw Carlos D. near the Kmart at Astor Place." It's not like he's hard to miss; tonight's outfit, for example, is a long

black jacket, striped trousers, impossibly high boots. Any sane person would think he looks like an SS guard who fell into a time portal and wound up with a bass amp (he's also given to wearing a gun holster, though tonight it's at home).

"Expressions of irony through clothing are very important," he says. "I didn't wake up and go, 'I'm gonna dress like a Nazi.' But when I start thinking about how I want to make myself look cool, it starts to take shape along those lines." While it may be a bit of intentional antagonism, he says, "I don't go into my Laundromat with full-on Nazi regalia. I don't feel like getting into a sociological battle with the peons that surround me on a daily, hourly basis."

The "militaristic" style is the latest incarnation of Carlos Dengler (he changed his last name because he hated the sound, and yes, his mother's still heartbroken). In fairly chronological order, they were: metalhead, stoner, ethereal-music fan, dreadlocked hardcore kid, goth, club DJ, bassist. The most crucial switchover happened at 15, when a move from Queens to Trenton allowed him to reinvent himself from a mullet-wearing misfit into a guitar-playing misfit. He wasn't getting beat up anymore, but he still despised many of his classmates, that disdain became rage when his favorite band, Metallica, released their self-titled "Black Album."

"All the preppy, popular, jocky assholes I had to endure for years started donning Metallica T-shirts because they saw 'Enter Sandman' on MTV," he says. "I thought that this was the ultimate betrayal."

It's disarming to hear a 30-year-old man still use the phrase "preppy, popular, jocky assholes," but Carlos D. has clearly never gotten over the days when he was harassed, he says, for being "too sensitive." As he talks about his DJ nights, his vitriol toward bridge-and-tunnelers is so genuine it's astonishing. But everything in his life—his clothes, his music—comes down to that formative era. Pissed at Metallica's success, he gave up the guitar for three years; it would take Kessler's prodding to get him to think about taking up the bass, and even then, he wasn't sure Interpol was for him. He was in college, and he just wanted to do as much as he could get away with.

And that's what he's doing now: getting away with as much as he can. He's the only member of the band not in a long-term relationship, and judging by the more brazen fans crowding his DJ booth at the MisShapes club night just a few evenings earlier, there's a certain sort of woman who flocks to him. "Twenty-year-old girls—that's his main constituency," says former tour mate Mattie Safer of the Rapture (the band, not the catastrophic biblical event). "Usually they're kind of goth, because he has that going on. Carlos has got some neon signs attached to him."

And he loves the goth chicks right back. "I go for that 19th-century sort of girl," he says. "A very elegant, dark look. Very Victorian." When it comes to sex and drugs, Carlos D. says he approaches both "like the Romans. Roman aristocrats had orgies in their villas because they saw themselves being almost extensions of the gods. They acted how the gods acted—basically munching on grapes and fucking each other in the woods." The way he enthuses about the subject, it's pretty clear Carlos D. has been out in the woods, quite possibly fucking a grape; he also seems sure it's that gonzo existence that makes him so appealing. But it's not particularly healthy, which is why he says, "I've reached the apex of this whole party reputation. I don't need to be that guy anymore."

The next day, Carlos D. has an appointment with his tailor; he thinks a lot about how he's perceived, and as Interpol has become more conspicuous, his fussiness has started to take its toll. "I can't walk down the street without trying to look as perfect as possible," he says with so much emphasis his eyes appear to water. "I get bogged down with these trivialities and worries."

"I actually have a therapist," he continues, "and this is the big topic. It used to be, 'I want my band to become really popular, and I want to be really popular.' Then the band got really popular." He pauses. "And it became, 'Well, you got what you wanted.'" ■

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## GREATEST MOMENTS IN

# Goth

Through the darkness before the dawn and the depths of despair, intrepid goths from the beginning of time have borne the burden of life's merciless cruelties with dignity, grace, and much, much makeup. Bela Lugosi may be dead, but Interpol live, and the lugubrious sound of goth endures. Fly! Fly! Children of the night!

BY ANDREW BEAUJON

### The Seventh Day After Creation

**GOD** RESTS, then invents the color black and, eventually, church and boredom. On or about the 13th day, He creates the bat.



### Sometime After That

**LUCIFER, AN ANGEL, FALLS FROM GRACE.** Many will identify with his dilemma, i.e., being forsaken by all but your fellow outcasts. Plus, he probably wore black.

### Fourth Century B.C.

**ABSINTHE,** a highly hallucinogenic drink made from wormwood, is recommended by the father of medicine, Hippocrates, as a cure for jaundice.



**33 A.D. JESUS CHRIST IS CRUCIFIED** on a device called a cross, whose ironic potential remains unlocked for several millennia, until sex- and death-obsessed young people incite a fashion craze.

**400** A loose collective of German tribes, called **GOTHS**, begins a 200-year campaign against the Roman Empire.

**700-800** Early European Christians co-opt the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain and begin celebrating All Saint's Day, or Allhallowmas. The night before the holiday is called All Hallows Eve, or **ALL HALLOW E'E'N**.

### 1100 GOTHIC

**ARCHITECTURE,** so-called by critics of the style who consider it barbaric, takes root in Europe. Cathedrals feature ribbed vaults, flying buttresses, stained-glass windows, and gargoyles.

**1200** Fashionable Aztec women begin coloring their skin yellow with **OCHRE**, paving the

way for the ghostly, lipstick-smeared visage of the Cure's **ROBERT SMITH** and that girl in the bookstore with the white pancake makeup and tattooed eyebrows.



**1431** Birth of **VLAD DRACULA**, a.k.a. Vlad the Impaler, a murderous Romanian prince and the basis of a certain legend.



**1692** In the Massachusetts Bay Colony's Salem Village, two young women begin to act strangely—writing on the ground, shrieking blasphemies, and entering trances, possibly as a result of illness or stress from their restrictive, religious upbringing. A **WITCHCRAFT SCARE** grips the village. Before the colony's governor ends the furor, 19 men and women are executed and 150 are imprisoned.



**1764** On a dark and stormy night, Horace Walpole publishes *THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO*, supposedly a translation of an ancient manuscript, but in fact the first example of gothic fiction.

**1816** While summering in Switzerland with her husband, Percy, and friend Lord Byron, Mary Shelley accepts Byron's challenge to write a ghost story. Two years later, her very scary gothic Romantic novel, *FRANKENSTEIN*, tells the story of the famous misunderstood monster.



**1830** GOTHIC REVIVAL begins in earnest, as spire-mad Victorians graft medieval motifs onto all buildings. Notable examples include Walpole's mansion, the British Houses of

Parliament, and St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

**1835** French chemist Thilorier (note his mononym!) discovers that solid carbon dioxide gives off smoke; this "DRY ICE" is later put to great use in horror movies and Cure concerts.



**1849** Writer EDGAR ALLAN POE dies in Baltimore, after a lifetime of scaring the living bahoo out of audiences with his gothic prose.

**1873** The proto-vampiric relationship between French symbolist poets PAUL MARIE VERLAINE and ARTHUR RIMBAUD ends in gothic banality when Verlaine pops a cap in his young consort's wrist. Verlaine dies years later, his body ravaged by absinthe.

**1875** ALEISTER CROWLEY, occultist and sullen-teen magnet, is born in England. His exhortations to anarchy and personal growth will powerfully influence goth groups like Current 93 and Fields of the Nephilim.

**1882** BELA LUGOSI, future horror-movie legend, is born. **1897** Bram Stoker publishes *DRACULA*, a novel about a nocturnal, undead Transylvanian count who terrorizes British society types by sucking their blood.



## 1919-1935

The golden age of goth horror films



*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919)



*Nosferatu* (1922)



*Dracula* (1931)



*Frankenstein* (1931)



*The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935)



**1923** Author H.P. Lovecraft first publishes a short story in *Weird Tales* magazine. The extraterrestrial gods, grimoires, New England towns, and antiquarian speech of his fiction—termed the "CTHULHU MYTHOS"—are hugely influential.

**1956** BELA LUGOSI IS DEAD; three years later, Robert Smith is born. Coincidence? Yes. Cheap shot? Undoubtedly!

**1958** England's HAMMER FILMS begins a five-year streak of near-perfection with *Horror of Dracula*, starring Christopher Lee. The studio's movies will grow ever campier and provide excellent imagery for goth-rock stage visuals.

**1960** THE DR. MARTENS 1460 boot becomes commercially available.



**1964** THE ADDAMS FAMILY, based on the devilishly witty cartoons of *The New Yorker's* Charles Addams, debuts on ABC. The 1991 movie version will feature Christina Ricci in the role of goth youth Wednesday.

**1966** ANTON LAVEY founds the Church of Satan, using "Satan" as a metaphor for doing whatever the hell you want outside of mainstream society. Brian "MARILYN MANSON" Warner (not yet born) will find this illuminating.

**1972** AMPHIGOREY, a collection by twisted artist Edward Gorey, is released. Will eventually adorn many a youth's dark lair.



## Birth Cycle of American Female Goth Icons

WINONA RYDER (née Horowitz) in Minnesota (1971). FAIRUZ BALK in California (1974). CHRISTINA RICCI in California (1980).

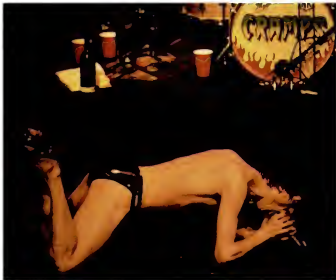




**1975** *THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW* debuts, with Tim Curry as a transvestite in bondage wear who creates a hotter, gayner version of Frankenstein's monster and seduces a straight man. The film flops but becomes a midnight cult classic.



**1976** Anne Rice's *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* published.



**1979** Factory label president Tony Wilson describes JOY DIVISION's new direction as "gothic." The term gains currency when BAUHAUS release their iconic debut single, "Bela Lugosi's Dead." Also, the horror-movie-obsessed CRAMPS release *Gravest Hits*.

**1980** Joy Division's IAN CURTIS hangs himself. *THE DAMNED*, fronted by former grave digger Dave Vanian, move away from punk and begin to codify goth rock with *The Black Album*. Goth-friendly label 4AD is founded.

**1981** ELVIRA's *Movie Macabre* program debuts on KJL-TV in Los



**1976** Punk scenester SIOUXSIE SIOUXSIE gets serious about the black makeup, toys with Nazi imagery, names her band the Banshees after a Vincent Price movie, and inspires the entire aesthetic of Interpol's Carlos D. Two years later, the Banshees' debut, *The Scream*, will enshrine the early goth look and sound.



Angeles. The show features a buxom, black-clad host (comedian Cassandra Peterson) in a dark wig and pale makeup introducing horror movies. Singer Ollie Wisdom forms the band Specimen and a year later opens the BATCAVE club in London, home to bands like Sex Gang Children and Southern Death Cult.

## 1982

A high-water mark for goth's musical evolution



The Cure's *Pornography* is released.



Inspired by the German Expressionist "Schrei" (i.e., shriek) opera style, Diamanda Galas debuts with *The Litanies of Satan*.



Australia's Birthday Party, featuring future goth auteur Nick Cave, popularize the legendary catchphrase "Release the bats."



Los Angeles death-rockers Christian Death release *Only Theatre of Pain*.



**1983** The opening scene of *THE HUNGER*—featuring screaming monkeys, Bauhaus performing "Bela Lugosi's Dead," and vampires David Bowie and Catherine Deneuve stalking a disco for victims—is the Most Goth Moment of All Time. U.S. goth pioneers .45 GRAVE learn that it's better to be first than best—their superior debut, *Sleep in Safety*, never escapes Christian Death's shadow.



**1985** The U.K.'s SISTERS OF MERCY bow with *First and Last and Always*, then embark upon a career of breaking up, splitting into subgroups, suing one another, and releasing records under so many different names that record-store clerks go absolutely bats trying to keep things straight.

**1986** Goth jokers DOCTOR & THE MEDICS cover Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky," which becomes a staple at goth club nights all over the world.

**1987** *THE LOST BOYS* released. Kiefer Sutherland as a vampire! Corey Haim as a human being!



**1988** The Cure's Robert Smith marries Mary Poole in a Sussex abbey, crushing and somehow simultaneously touching the hearts of pale children of the night. **HOT TOPIC** founded, giving aspiring goths access to suitably extreme clothes while their parents browse Crate and Barrel.



**1989** James O'Barr's bleak, haunting comic book *THE CROW* is published. A movie adaptation is released in 1994, starring



Brandon Lee, who is accidentally shot to death while filming one of the final scenes. Lee's sinister, heavily made-up look is adopted by legions of goth kids.

**1991** A good year for heartwarming goth: **THIS MORTAL COIL's** *Blood* and the dead-husband movie *TRULY MADLY DEEPLY* are released.



**1994** Goth goes massive with Mark Romanek's Joel-Peter Witkin-inspired video for **NINE INCH NAILS'** "Closer." Trent Reznor flies through a dusty, creepy room, accompanied by images of death, sadomasochism, asexual nudity, insects, and of course, top hats.



**1996** Marilyn Manson's *ANTICHRIST SUPERSTAR* perfects "mall goth."



**1997** *Saturday Night Live's* "GOTH TALK" sketch debuts, featuring Chris Kattan as host Zdrael Abyss, a Florida teen who always signs off by saying, "Stay out of the daylight."



**1999** Goth culture comes under the microscope after two misfits massacre 13 people at **COLUMBINE** High School in Colorado. The boys are fans of Marilyn Manson and part of a clique called "The Trenchcoat Mafia," but not goths. Still, in the ensuing media circus, schools will ban black clothing and goth accessories.

**2000**

Raise a glass of **VAMPIRE VODKA** to Dave Vanian and Gun Club/ Sisters of Mercy diva Patricia Morrison, who marry after she joins the Damned.



**SUICIDEGIRLS.COM**, a soft-core-porn website featuring tattooed, sorta goth topless girls, is founded.

**2003** Former Christian-rock kids **EVANESCENCE** have a huge hit with their goth-inspired "Bring Me to Life," which would have sounded so awesome under the closing credits of *The Crow*. I want to ferment your grapes! Surprisingly good **RED WINES FROM PENNSYLVANIA** begin to make inroads among gourmand goths.



**2004** The Cure reanimate themselves for the **CURIOUS** tour, taking Mogwai, Interpol, and classic goth to the sheds of Bush's America. Also, emo goth hits the scene with **MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE's** breakout album, *Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge*.

**2005** **CHEER DARK**, a laundry detergent specifically designed for black clothes, becomes widely available in supermarkets.



# Name That Doom

Though the mainstream media targets anyone wearing black as a goth transgressor, there are many shades of the tribe. Here's a guide for the uninitiated. BY ALEXANDER CHOW

## 1 Deathrockers

The OG of goths, straight out of '60s Hammer horror movies and '70s punk. Wearing ripped T-shirts, mohawks, safety pins, and piercings, they try to look as dead as possible at all times—not a dying-of-old-age death, but rather an I-jumped-off-the-Empire-State-Building-and-landed-on-rusty-metal-spikes death. **NATURAL HABITAT:** The worst parts of town. **VOTED MOST LIKELY TO:** Die of a heroin overdose. **FAVORITE BANDS:** Siouxsie and the Banshees, the Birthday Party, Christian Death, the Damned, the Misfits. **FAVORITE MOVIE:** *Friday the 13th*.

## 2 Victorian Goth

Rather than in the grave, Victorian Goths are poised above it, surrounded by weeping marble angels, reciting the complete works of Edgar Allan Poe. Distinguished by their corsets and gowns (all black, of course). Silver goblets, walking canes, and changing your name to Lord Crowley optional. Imagine a funeral procession in 1840 England. **NATURAL HABITAT:** Cemeteries, poetry readings. **VOTED MOST LIKELY TO:** Actually be a vampire. **FAVORITE BANDS:** Cocteau Twins, Dead Can Dance. **FAVORITE MOVIE:** *Interview With the Vampire*.

## 3 Rivethead Goth

Inspired by the brutal, beat-intensive electronics of industrial music, Rivetheads display a fascination with apocalyptic harshness through their combative gear—metal studs, heavy boots, chains, straps, buckles, goggles, and anything else that would help in case World War III suddenly broke out. **NATURAL HABITAT:** Germany. **VOTED MOST LIKELY TO:** Bang on tin drums and sheet metal in C# minor. **FAVORITE BANDS:** Einstürzende Neubauten, Skinny Puppy, Merzbow, Front 242, Throbbing Gristle, Rammstein. **FAVORITE MOVIE:** *Metropolis*.



## 4 Glam Goth

After the first wave of goth groups crested in the mid-'80s, a second wave adapted the then-popular Los Angeles neo-glam-metal sound (Ratt, Poison, et al.) with lyrical themes of witchcraft, the devil, and the occult. The modern Glam Goth may move around, but he also wants to rock your world, insisting that Aquanet never should have gone out of style. **NATURAL HABITAT:** 1987. **VOTED MOST LIKELY TO:** Be 40. **FAVORITE BANDS:** The Cult, the Mission U.K., Gene Loves Jezebel. **FAVORITE MOVIE:** Guns N' Roses' "November Rain" video.

## 5 Geek Goth

More likely to be casting Magic Missile than visiting cemeteries. Exists solely on caffeine and computer games; social interaction consists of AOL Instant Messenger and Ultima Online. Usually found wearing dark-lensed glasses and a black trench coat draped over a *Magic: The Gathering* T-shirt. **NATURAL HABITAT:** Coffee shops, Renaissance fairs, mall food courts, being forcefully stuffed into high school lockers. **VOTED MOST LIKELY TO:** Rescue Princess Eowyn. **FAVORITE BAND:** Marilyn Manson. **FAVORITE MOVIE:** *Revenge of the Nerds*.

## 6 Cybergoth (a.k.a. Graver)

Ravers who've come down from their Ecstasy trips and embraced the grim realities of sobriety. Cybergoths fuse Rivethead industrial death imagery with the color palette of rave (neon orange, fluorescent pink). Obsessed with anything futuristic—silver body suits decorated with computer chips, for example. **NATURAL HABITAT:** The future. **VOTED MOST LIKELY TO:** Be mistaken for a robot. **FAVORITE BANDS:** Wolfenstein, VNV Nation, Covenant, Apoptygma Bezerk. **FAVORITE MOVIE:** *The Matrix*.

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES JEAN

**SPINHouse Live #7 - Tegan and Sara**

Spin Offices New York City, 01.12.05



Two sisters. Two acoustic guitars.  
 One intimate performance.  
 The dynamic duo sister act brought their  
 unique pop-folk and punk sound to the  
 New York Spin office for SPINHouse Live #7.



(1) Tegan and Sara with  
 Spin associate editor Caryn Ganz,  
 (2 & 3) Partygoers, (4) Spin account  
 manager Laura Lubrano and friend,  
 (5, 6 & 7) Tegan and Sara perform



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**Forty Shades of Blue Cocktail Party**

Grub Steak, Park City, Utah, 01.23.05



Spin hosted a cocktail reception celebrating the premiere of director  
 Ira Sachs' *Forty Shades of Blue*. Congratulations to the cast and crew of  
 the film, which went on to win Sundance Film Festival's most coveted award,  
 the **Grand Jury Prize**, in the Dramatic Competition.

(1) Spin senior associate editor David Itzkoff with Rip Torn, (2) Damian Volpe  
 (sound supervisor) and Chris Edwards (post-production supervisor),  
 (3) Margot Bridger (producer) and Spin publisher Jacob Hill, (4) Ira Sachs  
 (director) with actors Andrew Henderson, Darren Burrows, and Dina Korzun

Sponsored by Avid Technology


**SpinDance**

Chef Dance, Park City, Utah, 01.22.05

At our forey into the Sundance  
 Film Festival, SpinDance  
 celebrated the upcoming movie  
 adaptation of Irvine Welsh's  
 book, *Ecstasy*. The World's #1  
 DJ, Paul Oakenfold really lived  
 up to his reputation throwing  
 down rocking beats into the  
 wee hours of the morning.


(1) Rocco DiSpirito,  
 (2 & 3) Partygoers,  
 (4) Paul Oakenfold

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Getting  
rich without  
having to die trying,  
50 Cent is back with  
a new album that asks you  
to visit his candy shop and  
beware the perils of heroin.  
Now he's even claiming that  
he never smoked pot. Has  
the foulmouthed party pimp  
really become a clean-living,  
VitaminWater-drinking  
businessman?

**It's difficult to talk to Curtis "50 Cent"**

Jackson without thinking about how many times he's been shot. Even if you're chatting about his grandmother, you can see the scar from a bullet wound on his right cheek—it looks like somebody put out a cigarette on the rapper's face. Every time you glance at him, you're reminded that this person should have been dead before he turned 23. • Therefore, it's surprising to discover that 50 Cent is a completely affable thug. He has the kind of natural charisma that gets people elected to the Senate. He's thicker than most NFL nickelbacks and smothered in ice

**BY CHUCK KLOSTERMAN**

(his diamond necklace could probably bankroll the space program). But at least in person, there's nothing remotely intimidating about him. He almost seems like somebody auditioning for the cast of *The Apprentice*. • "I apply the same ethics to music that I did when I was 12 years old hustling on the street corner: Consistency is essential, and never compromise on quality," says 50, as he reclines in the New York offices of Interscope Records. "Selling music is like selling drugs. If you want your clientele to keep coming back, you need to consistently supply a quality product. People know what they want. ▶





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NEW YORK, N

"When I say, 'I'll let  
you lick the lollipop,'  
little kids think it's  
literally a lollipop."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
CHRIS BUCK



50 models his new pimp monocle—the J.F.K. edition

► People talk about how the music industry is struggling, but there's no strain on Eminem records. There's no strain on the Game. There's no strain on 50 Cent records. My first album was downloaded 300,000 times before it went on sale, but we still sold 872,000 copies the first week and 822,000 copies the second week. I don't believe in the oversaturation of a quality product."

The "quality product" 50 Cent is currently saturating America with is *The Massacre*, the follow-up to 2003's multiplatinum *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. Now the proud owner of a \$4.1 million Farmington, Connecticut mansion that he bought from Mike Tyson, 50 spoke to *Spin* on the eve of the new album's release, and the 28-year-old Eminem protégé unleashed some unpredictably charming (and predictably unsettling) thoughts on living, dying, and fucking.

Everyone knows that you've been shot nine times. In fact, that's the only thing much of the public seems to know about you. Does it feel strange to be famous for having been shot? My past is my shadow. In the press, being shot overshadowed my musical talent. But if I hadn't disclosed that fact, the information would have come out anyway. The new record is like another chapter of my life. I write angry when I'm angry, and I write humorous when I'm humorous. There are certain points where I choose to be sexual. Take "Candy Shop." I felt like I was on a tightrope on that record, because I wanted to be as sexual as possible without coming off as obscene.

You wrote "Candy Shop" because you say the male sexual perspective is not often represented in hip-hop. That confuses me. Isn't that perspective always represented in hip-hop? Yeah, but it's always in a derogatory way—it becomes vulgar. In order for it to be embraced on a massive level, the writer needs to be witty enough to stay on the tightrope. You don't want people to say, "Ah, turn that shit off. Did you hear what he said?"

Well, where does obscenity begin? It's all in the delivery. I think everyone of age, and even those who are not of age, are enjoying sex. But when I say, "Lick the lollipop," I'm trying to make a reference to the male organ that's not disrespectful. People are offended by *who* says something, not by *what* they say. If you were to say to a woman, "Bitch, get out of here," she might be offended. But if a woman says that to her best girlfriend, they both might laugh. When I made "Candy Shop," I thought about how my grandmother might interpret that song. I thought about how innocent children might hear it. Little kids think I'm actually talking about candy. When I say, "I'll let you lick the lollipop," they think it's literally a lollipop.

So you wanted to write a song about sex that would be accessible to children, based on the premise that children wouldn't understand what it's about? Yeah. That's exactly what I'm doing. It's similar to "Baltimore Love Thing" [another song from the new

album]. Baltimore has a high rate of heroin addiction. That record is about the romantic relationship between heroin and the addict, and there's a point where the heroin actually becomes upset with the user, because the user keeps trying to leave.

**Do you have much experience with heroin?** No. I haven't actually tried heroin. I sold drugs. But I got arrested with my godbrother and a guy who lived down the block when I was a teenager. It was my second time being arrested as a juvenile, so the authorities thought it would be better to send me to a drug-treatment program [so that I could] see how drugs actually affected people.

**So you were never addicted to any kind of drug?** No. I stayed away from it, because I'd been hustling since I was 12. As soon as I was introduced to drugs, I immediately started selling them. But I was addicted to the lifestyle and what came with that.

**I assume when you say "drugs," you don't mean pot. Because you smoke pot, right?** Never.

**You've never smoked marijuana? That seems difficult to believe.** They all smoke it around me. Everybody I know always smoked pot, but I never had an urge to try. I was always surrounded by people with drug addictions [50's mother was a crack dealer who was murdered when he was eight years old]. I was in a household where everyone was drunk and crazy, no clothes on in the bed, that sort of thing. As a little kid, you walk into a room like that and you think it's crazy.

**But the character in your first-person songs seems to be smoking pot constantly.** When I rap lines like, "I smoke that good shit," that's just me using my head. That's me knowing that there are 500,000 people out there who just want to play my records and get high. I watched Method Man base his career on that. I watched Redman base his career on that. I watched Afroman sell music based on getting high, and I watched Dre make a record called *The Chronic*.

**But isn't that the epitome of exploitation? You're basically glamorizing something that you would never do yourself in order to sell records.** You know what? I've been high off of weed so many times from contact highs, just from people around me. If you were to ask me if I ever buy a blunt and smoke it up, then no, I don't. But if you ask if everyone around me smokes it all the time while I'm around, then yes. I just don't want to spend my money on it. And when you talk about the concept of exploitation—you ever notice how many artists endorse alcoholic beverages? I had the option to do all of those things. But because I don't drink, I choose to endorse VitaminWater. That is a better reflection of my lifestyle. You have to be able to differentiate between what *seems* real, and what's really a reflection of the environment that someone comes from. It's like when a newspaper writes a story about someone who wants to kill me. I'm always like, "Tell me something I don't know."

**Do you worry about getting killed?** No.

**Do you worry about getting shot?** No.

**Do you still wear a bulletproof vest?** Yes. There's obviously a possibility that I might get shot. There's a possibility that you might get shot. The difference is that I come from an environment where life

is cheaper. The threat level is higher, because people envy me. I have to take different precautions. I have to drive a bulletproof car.

**Do you consider yourself a violent person?** When I have to be.

**Will you always have the capacity to be violent?** I will always have the capacity to do that. When I interact with others, they always meet one of two different people: the person who had to get by on the street and the person who was my grandma's baby. I can respond to people in a way that disarms them and makes them more comfortable. But I can also become someone they don't want to see—that part of my life is not necessarily over. But if you're asking me when was the last time I committed a crime, I wouldn't tell you that.

**What's it like living in Mike Tyson's house?** I'm not living in Tyson's house. I'm living in my house. Mike is a great guy, though. He had some things that I was going to get rid of, some older light fixtures. But then I found out they were made of gold, so I kept them.

**Is it true that you videotape your sexual encounters? I heard a rumor that you always do that, not necessarily for sexual reasons,**

but for legal reasons. Yeah. I'm the biggest target [for extortionists]. I always tell women, "When you come in this room, there is going to be a surveillance camera." And it's not only for legal reasons. I enjoy watching it, too, if I feel like I performed.

**Can you talk a little about this movie you're making, *Locked and Loaded*?** Well, it's not titled *Locked and Loaded* anymore.

We just changed it to *A Hustler's Ambition*. It's loosely based on my life story.

**When you say "loosely," do you mean more or less like *8 Mile* was based on Eminem's life?** I'm not sure. I don't exactly know all the details of his story. But it's a great script. There is a lot of me in the story, and it works for an hour and a half. [Screenwriter] Terry Winter is great; he just won an Emmy for writing *The Sopranos*. Jim Sheridan is a great director. You ever heard of *My Left Foot*?

**You took some criticism for an interview you gave to *Playboy* last year. Some people accused you of homophobia.** The thing is, the guy who interviewed me was a homosexual. [Editor's note: *Actually, the writer is not gay.*] He asked me if I had a problem hanging out with gay people. I said, "I don't hang out with gay people." What straight guy *intentionally* tries to make friends with gay guys? I think you need to question how straight you are if you have someone who's blatantly homosexual around you. My thought process is, "What is he thinking?" If he's attracted to men, and I'm a man, why would I bring him around if I'm not interested? I tried to explain that [to the interviewer] in the course of the conversation, but he was offended by my use of the word *faggot*. I didn't understand that. In my neighborhood, *gay* and *faggot* are two words that mean the same thing. Do I have a problem with gay guys? No way. Do I actively hang out with gay folks? No. But I actually like gay women. If a woman likes women, we can get something going. It's different. Standards are different. It's not me, it's the world. Look at the adult-film industry: In every adult film, there is a sequence where there are two women together. And you know why? It's simple man's thinking. Simple man's thinking asks, "What would be better than one good woman?" The answer is two women. ■



**New Year's Eve of destruction** (1) Robert Pollard shares a shot with onstage bartender Trader Vic at Chicago's Metro; (2) the singer pours his heart out; (3) Kevin March, Pollard, Chris Stusarenko, Nate Farley, and Doug Gillard say good-bye; (4) Stusarenko pulls his last bass face as a member of GBV

LA







For more than two ultraprolific decades, Robert Pollard led Guided by Voices on a drunken path to rapturous indie acclaim and unlikely rock stardom. Then he just decided to stop—sort of. Here's a behind-the-scenes look at their song-packed, and booze-soaked, final shows. **By Marc Spitz**





**Manhattan on the rocks** (1) At the December 5 gig, Pollard starts to regret that preshow fuchsia-body-painting session; (2) Fabrizio Moretti and Drew Barrymore steady the backstage royalty; (3) long about song number 57, Gillard wonders if he should be playing "Tractor Rape Chain" or "I Wanna Be a Dumbcharger"



# IF

this were an obituary for Guided by Voices, who played their last show on December 31, after 21 years and many varying lineups (all featuring captain/singer/songwriter Robert Pollard). I might write something like this: The beloved Dayton, Ohioans never released a bad song. Out of the

(seriously) 851 or so GBV songs that have been released, there are only the very great, the pretty great, and the merely good (among these merely good are the potentially very great, had they not been minute-long melodic doodles). Also among the good and great are several that are timeless: "A Saly Salute," "I Am a Scientist," "Echos Myron," and "Motor Away." Each one features a deceptively complicated pop melody paired with madcap Dadaist lyrics, often delivered in a perfectly wiggly British accent. I'd remind readers of how the hissy quality of their recordings inspired one of rock lit's most enduring phrases: lo-fi. I'd applaud the band for discovering and big-brothering the Strokes after Albert Hammond Jr. tossed a demo onstage during a 2000 GBV show at New York City's Irving Plaza.

Most importantly, I'd credit them for providing indie rock with its first Hollywood-worthy myth: Midwestern elementary school teacher, well into his 30s, with a passion for beer and the Who, creates sonic masterpieces with his brother and pals in a garage on evenings and weekends. He releases them himself or on tiny labels. In 1992, he happens into a wider distribution deal with then-Cleveland-based indie Scat, and later New York's Matador. Cue the critical accolades and the liquor-drenched world tours—featuring many arena-rock mic twirls and high kicks—that actually may have resembled early Who shows.

We already know that the 47-year-old Pollard will move on, and that he's really GBV anyway, the way Trent Reznor is Nine Inch Nails and Conor Oberst is Bright Eyes. Elements of any future projects (including a solo double album, a comedy record called *Relaxation of the Asshole*, and an EP recorded as the Moping Swans) will be comforting familiar. Still, the notion of a world without GBV, like one

without fellow eternally touring institutions the Ramones, sent a genuine shudder (or was it the DTs?) through the rock community when Pollard announced the band's split onstage last April. By then he had stopped dyeing his silver hair brown, quit smoking, and gotten engaged. "I think it's like taking down the flag," he says when I ask about the emotional reaction the statement provoked among fans. "I guess they're afraid to not be a part of Guided by Voices. It's the club. It's the guild. It's the fraternity or something."

Did he think the band were being taken for granted? "Some people were like, 'Oh, here comes Guided by Voices again,'" Pollard says. "We were losing part of the mystique that we started with."

This isn't an obituary. It's a road story, chronicling the last six shows of the band's Electrifying Conclusion tour: a Viking funeral during which many are rocked, beer is guzzled and thrown, Strokes cry, and Jules Asner, of all people, dances.

## December 3, 2004 Irving Plaza, Manhattan

As it does for many touring bands, New York feels like home for Guided by Voices. It's a rock 'n' roll city. You play here every tour, and if you're veterans, you know your way around, as do Pollard and the last GBV lineup: guitarists Doug Gillard and Nate Farley, drummer Kevin March, and bassist Chris Slusarenko. There was even talk of playing the final New Year's Eve show here rather than at Chicago's Metro (Chicago won since it's a fan-friendly equidistance from both coasts). The girlfriends, fiancées, wives, and kids backstage only add to the warm feeling. As this is the first of three Manhattan shows, gravity hasn't set in. There's just lots of drinking (every GBV rider includes a bottle of Cuervo, a bottle of Jameson's, and a couple cases of beer) and backslapping as the brightly lit dressing room fills up. Strokes guitarist Albert Hammond Jr. is here to see his "Uncle Bob." "I'm coming to every show," he says. This, despite the fact that his own band is deep into recording its third album. (Note: He will not only make good on his guarantee; he will wear the same outfit each night.)

About 45 minutes before showtime, tour manager Rich Turiel



**Chicago—The Musical** (4) March always has his replacement kit nearby; (5) one fan wouldn't need more shows if he could manage to stay awake through this one; (6) a call for more vomit in the monitor does not go unheeded; (7) stripes—the official pattern of GBV's final tour



produces four 8 1/2-by-11 sheets of paper, tapes them together to form a road-map-size set list, and hands it to Pollard, along with a large Sharpie. The frontman, who's already buzzed, fills every inch of white with blocky black scrawl. Sixty-some songs in all. Three hours' worth of loud, jangly, backbeat-heavy pure pop.

"I spent about a month rehearsing," drummer March tells me when I marvel at the enormity of the set. "A typical set list was 50 songs. You had to know about a hundred songs at any given time. He's been adding all the time, so [the pool] of songs is now close to 200."

Pollard will announce a tune to the crowd: "This is one off the *Propeller* album." "This is off the *I Am a Scientist* EP." And the band will pull it up from their internal database and crank it out. Somehow, in his state of extreme intoxication, Pollard will hit nearly every note and recall every lyric. "At least three times, Bob came up to me before a show and said, 'I can't remember the lyrics. What's the second verse in whatever song?' When he's hammered, that's when he remembers

them all," says former GBV bassist and ex-*Spin* writer Jim Greer. "The best part is when he makes up lyrics. He has an extraordinary facility to come up with them on the spot. He's connected to that alternate consciousness, but only when he drinks. Some people smoke pot and become geniuses. He just drinks."

At 10 P.M., Turiel informs the band, "The movie's running." The strains of a new GBV ballad, "Window of My World," play on the PA as a seagull flies across Irving Plaza's lowered video screen, followed by a montage of photos of Pollard and long-gone band members. They're hoisting beer. Looking young. Hungry. Happy. It's probably designed to be ironic, what with the birds and the strings, but the film conveys genuine pathos.

GUIDED BY VOICES 1983-2004 flashes on the screen. And the chant of "G-B-V! G-B-V! G-B-V!" commences. The band walk onstage, dignified and adored, then proceed to trash everyone who ever crossed them, directly or not.

"The Rolling Stones suck."

"Fuck L.A."

"This next one is for a particular scumbag who didn't wanna pay us royalties."

It's a bilefest. Scores will be settled along this road. Fortunately, the spleen is vented between shimmering renditions of "Gold Star for Robot Boy" and "Glad Girls."

"This is the tightest I've ever seen them," Hammond offers. After the show, Pollard allows himself a cigarette. Eyes half shut with fatigue and drink, he passes from well-wisher to well-wisher, giving hugs and indulging in the kind of desperate love that only comes after you announce you're going away. "I'm Brian Wilson in reverse," he quips.

## December 4, 2004 Irving Plaza

"You ready to get bloated?" bassist Slusarenko asks as I stagger into the dressing room. He lifts a bottle of tequila and sucks three shots' worth down his throat. Guided by Voices don't have much use for glasses, and I doubt even the Pogues at their most festive could out-



Other Voices: Tobin Sprout, Mitch Mitchell, Jim Greer, Kevin Fennell, and Pollard in 1995

## GUIDED BY VOICES

booze this group. Many of the folks in here are severely hungover. The gung ho energy of the previous evening has dulled. Pollard, in fact, seems to be the only one walking upright. But that does not mean the imbibing will be any different tonight. I watch band pal and onstage bartender "Trader Vic" blot the sweat from the deli tray cold cuts and I almost retch.

Pollard finishes up the set list and rises to meet *Ocean's* 12 director Steven Soderbergh, who's ushered backstage with his wife, former E! channel personality Jules Asner. She's not the most random famous person I've ever spotted at an indie-rock show, but...okay, she is the most random famous person I've ever spotted at an indie-rock show.

"The first night is always a little more guarded, a little tighter," Slusarenko tells me. "The second night it becomes all fierce."

The movie rolls at 10. The chant begins at 10:15. Three minutes later, things become fierce. The band open with "Demons Are Real," off the 1994 breakthrough *Bee Thousand*. Stalking around with his eyes slit and head shaking, Pollard looks ready to brawl.

"You kids like Conor Oberst?" Conor Oberst?" he says. "Conor Oberst used to fuck Winona Ryder. Why do these Hollywood stars wanna fuck rock singers?" Pollard does not know that the Bright Eyes singer is actually in the house. ("The people that I went off on, I had no reason to do that," Pollard tells me later. "I go off on whatever artist I'm jealous of because they sell more records than me.")

Hammond walks backstage, looking for a place to pee. He peers down on the stage from the staircase where I'm positioned, along with family and friends, watching GBV lead the crowd in a sing-along to "The Gold Heart Mountaintop Queen Directory." No place to go down there. Finally, Hammond opens a window, dangling his dick out over Irving Place. Rock stars. They fuck Winona. And piss anywhere.

### December 5, 2004

Irving Plaza

Today is officially Guided by Voices Day in the city. At stops along the tour, mayors have honored Pollard and company with their very own day. New York's Michael Bloomberg, who clearly has no idea how much unlawful indoor smoking is going on in the dressing room, is no different. In celebration, Pollard has donned a black T-shirt that reads KING OF NEW YORK in big letters on the front, with the command DRINK IT'S GBV DAY on the back. Michael Imperioli, *The Sopranos'* Christopher Moltisanti, is here, virtually unrecognizable in a white T-shirt and jeans. The Strokes' fold has tripled. In addition to Hammond, bassist Nikolai Fraiture and drummer Fabrizio Moretti arrive backstage with Moretti's girlfriend, Drew Barrymore. "You look good," Pollard tells the couple. "You look thin and in love."

"Last year I was fat and in love," Barrymore replies. "This year it's the treadmill." (Later that night, Pollard will dedicate the ballad "Smothered in Hugs" to the pair.)

"It's bittersweet," Moretti tells me. "That term has been thrown around a lot tonight, because we knew it was

going to be great, but it's also marked for death. They're such a great band, and they really taught me a lot about how to be a band and how to fucking comport myself on the road, so it's kind of sad to see the last show in New York." Moretti will forgo the VIP area and spend the entire show in the pit, screaming along to every song. Pollard will hand him beers from the stage. "Fab, I know you're of age," he'll say, laughing, while denying brews to hundreds of less-famous fans. "This is an all-ages show," Pollard apologizes. "I could end up going to jail—on GBV Day."

The show is not only the best of the seven Guided by Voices gigs I've seen, it's easily one of the best rock shows period. Three-and-a-half solid hours of angry, joyous, inspired bashing. Guys in ball caps rush the stage to hug Pollard as if he were Morrissey. He hands them the mic, and they drunkenly wall the lyrics to "Sad if I Lost It" and "Teenage FBI."

"I want a cigarette," Pollard complains, and fans pelt him with dozens. "They throw panties at Tom Jones; they throw cigs at me." Slusarenko and Gillard, knowing Pollard is trying to go cold turkey, lovingly kick them away. Pollard opts to swig from a tequila bottle. "When it's your last show, you can get as fucked-up as you want," he tells the crowd. "We can play 70 songs for you if we want to. That's the power of the stage. We'll play our assholes out for you. Then get new assholes."

When Jim Greer comes onstage to perform "Johnny Appleseed," Pollard introduces him: "Hey! Hey! He used to fuck Kim Deal!"

The band members duck backstage after the nightly final song, "Murder Charge" (which features the lyric "And that's the electrifying conclusion"), and huddle as Pollard calls out the encores: "Motor Away," "Scientist," "Echos Myron." They all nod. Slusarenko looks at me before returning. "Out of the tunnel," he says, "into the light."

### December 13, 2004

Tabu Club, Orlando, Florida

Guided by Voices, I learn, have a special relationship with their Orlando fans. Much like the first wave of British punks, these Floridians express their love by throwing beer. Gallons of it. They've become so famous for this act that the last time GBV played, the band took the stage in goggles and raincoats. "We looked like Devo," Pollard says.

Tonight they're playing in a disco booked by local promoter/superfan Jim Flaherty, who ducks into the dressing room to check in on the band. "I told them, 'I will physically fly to Dayton and beat you if you don't play here,'" he says. "I put them up in a four-star hotel, decorated their rooms with memorabilia. And we're trying to play down the beer-throwing."

I watch the show from the balcony, worried about the beer barrage. The band walk onstage, and sure enough the projectiles commence, although they hardly live up to the legend. Maybe Flaherty successfully put the kibosh on it all. Maybe the crowd realizes this will be the last time they get to hear the songs and have opted to listen politely.

"Thank you, Orlando," Pollard slurs. "Have you seen the new SpongeBob

## A GUIDED TOUR

Robert Pollard's (Ever-Changing)  
Top 10 GBV Songs

- 1 "Game of Pricks"  
(“Probably my favorite song I've written.”)
- 2 "I Am a Scientist"
- 3 "Tractor Rape Chain"
- 4 "Burning Flag Birthday Suit"
- 5 (tie) "Pink Gun" and "Matter Eater Lad"  
(“I like the silly, shorter, fragmented songs.”)
- 6 "Back to the Lake"
- 7 "Things I Will Keep"
- 8 "Chasing Heather Crazy"  
(“I submitted the songs for *Isolation Drills* and the label said, 'You're kind of holding back. You have more hits in you. Send us more stuff.' And they were giving me guide-lives, like, 'Think summer. Think cars and girls.' So I went back and wrote 'Chasing Heather Crazy' and a bunch of other really good pop. I could just write pop songs all day, and I'd be Burt Bacharach.”)
- 9 "Do the Earth"
- 10 "Everybody Thinks I'm a Raincloud"  
(“It's a new one!”)



**"The Hives suck. Franz Ferdinand suck. Anyone who gets more attention than us sucks."—ROBERT POLLARD**

movie? The soundtrack's got the Flaming Lips and Wilco and the flavors of the day on it. They didn't ask us to be on it. I wouldn't be on the SpongeBob movie soundtrack anyway. Fuck the SpongeBob movie!" This is what passes for passion tonight. Pollard later calls it a "Ten-shiver show. I promised you 12 shivers." The band seem ready for Christmas, and home.

"When all this is over," Farley says in front of his wife, "be sure to put that I'm gonna start making babies."

## December 30, 2004 *Metro, Chicago*

Dayton is representing tonight. Former GBV guitarist Tobin Sprout is the opening act. Bassist Greg Demos and drummers Don Thrasher and Jim MacPherson, ex-members all, mill about the basement dressing room in this legendary venue (where Smashing Pumpkins played their own farewell show four years ago).

Turiel hands Pollard the papers for tonight's set list, then carries two buckets labeled PUKE and PISS up the stairs to rest on the drum riser. "Don't piss in the puke bucket and don't puke in the piss bucket," someone warns.

"A lot of clubs we play don't even have bathrooms," says Pollard. "So we're like, 'We're not going to share the public restroom.' So we need to have a piss bucket, you know? And then we'd get some shit from security. They'd come down like, 'What the fuck are you doing?' 'We're pissing in the piss bucket, you know?'"

"Who empties the puke and piss buckets?" I ask.

"That's kind of on a rotational basis. A lot of times the low man on the totem pole, who might be the newest member. A lot of times the tour manager, Rich."

At 11:15, local scenester Beatle Bob—famous for attending shows

kitted out like a low-rent Ringo—takes the stage. "There are less than 25 hours left in 2004," he announces. "Six and a half of those are gonna be filled up by the greatest pop band in the world!"

GBV march onstage and rip into "Over the Neptune." The applause is loud and steady. Chicago, unlike Orlando, is an indie-rock town. And these fellow Midwesterners are revered. Their endurance, despite the onstage bar, is appropriately heroic. "You know who sucks?" Pollard asks. "The Hives suck." Massive cheer. "Franz Ferdinand suck. I sang the praises of the Shins. Now they're in all the magazines. They suck. Anyone who gets more attention than us sucks. The Clash suck. What did the Clash do? Fucking 'Rock the Casbah'?" Sour grapes, sure. But tonight, in Chicago, it's the gospel. Late in the set, Demos and MacPherson come on for "I Drove a Tank" and "Shocker in Gloomtown," Thrasher for "I Am a Scientist."

"Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Rick Nielsen," Pollard says, as if this were a telethon. "Please welcome Steve Albini." Neither Cheap Trick's Nielsen nor Shellac's Albini are in the house.

## December 31, 2004 *Metro*

It doesn't feel much different from the night before, and only starts to seem like New Year's Eve when Turiel and a Metro staffer lug in a Balthazar (the equivalent of 16 bottles) of Moët champagne, courtesy of Matador. Already buzzed and a bit agitated, Nate Farley is lingering in front of the dressing-room toilet. He holds three glasses of beer in his hand. "Like I'm not a stress case already," he groans. "Now I'm my mom's bartender, too." Mom apparently is using the WC.

Pollard steps into the vestibule to write out the final GBV set list. Tonight they'll play four full hours. Sixty-four songs. "I asked Rich to check with the *Guinness Book of World Records*," Pollard says, "see what's the most songs ever played at a single concert."

The last thing Bob Pollard does before taking the stage for the final Guided by Voices show? He ties his sneaker laces. Drink 12 beers, but be sure your laces are securely fastened. "G-B-V! G-B-V!" The crowd is manic. Beatle Bob approaches the mic again. "This band leaves behind a legacy of 21 years of some of the greatest pop recordings in the history of pop music," he rants. "Kevin, Chris, Nate, Doug, and Bobby. The world's greatest pop humans—Guided by Voices!"

"Thank you, crazy-ass Beatle Bob," Pollard says. The band play "Over the Neptune," same as last night but for the last time forever. "Are you guys planning on getting fucked-up?" he asks the crowd, who, like the band, are already fucked-up.

The passing of the old year and the entrance of the new get only a tiny acknowledgement. No "Auld Lang Syne." Just some balloons, which fall from the ceiling slowly and are punctured by dozens of lit cigarettes. "Is this? What is this? 2005? Aw, Jesus," Pollard frets. "Where's the champagne?"

The Moët is opened and distributed to the crowd and the set resumes. Pollard sings "Drinker's Peace" to Trader Vic while seated on a stool at the onstage bar, beneath a neon sign proclaiming, THE CLUB IS OPEN. Vic hands him a shot when it's over.

GBV leave the stage after "Smothered in Hugs." The chants begin again. It's obvious they're coming back. "Smothered in Hugs," though swell, is not a fitting epitaph. "Don't Stop Now," which Pollard introduces as "the ballad of Guided by Voices," is better. When it's done, family and friends come onstage; the band members hug one another and bask in the ovation. Then, a little bewildered, they walk off.

"When you're on stage for four hours and you're drinking," Pollard tells me two days later, back in Dayton, "you're getting progressively drunk with the crowd—after a while it becomes surreal. So by the last song, I didn't have any kind of sentimentality. I saw some of my friends crying, but I was a little bit too drunk."

Cheers to you then, and good night. ■



THEY MAY LORD OVER THE U.K. CHARTS, BUT THE KINGS OF LEON ARE STILL PRACTICALLY UNKNOWN IN THEIR NATIVE TENNESSEE. WITH A SOPHOMORE ALBUM THAT BRINGS ART-PUNK ZEAL TO THEIR RAW SOUTHERN ROCK, WILL THE FOLLOWILL BOYS FINALLY CONQUER THE U.S.?

# the royal family

By  
Andrew  
Beaujon

"And then to make matters worse there was a wet T-shirt contest that night."

Let's just enjoy that sentence. It's the kind of line that makes a journalist's day. And before Kings of Leon drummer Nathan Followill offered it, I was kind of despairing. I'd had dinner with the band and watched them perform before 3,800 enthusiastic Londoners, but I hadn't had much success capturing the kind of detail that makes readers feel like they're getting to know the people behind the music.

Sensing my desperation, Nathan tried to spice things up by what he calls "surreptitiously dry humping" guests

at the evening's after-party, standing close to a victim and subtly rocking his hips back and forth. He did it to a Bahraini playboy and promised to get Jude Law's ex-wife, but not before he snuck up on his soundman, who leaped away shouting, "What the fuck are you doing?"

"Mark that as two," Nathan instructed. He then repaired to the band's dressing room to regroup and enjoy the third

Photograph by Lucy Hamblin





"Ya know, if we moved to England we could afford a much bigger place".  
Jared, Matthew, Caleb,  
and Nathan-Followell

point I'd seen him holding since the Kings' set ended. Glass of Pinot Noir in hand, Nathan toddled over to the window to toss some Snickers bars to fans huddled below in the cold of an English December. Then he told me the story of the wet T-shirt contest that changed his life forever.

Back in 1997, Nathan and his brother Caleb, the Kings' singer, had recently stepped out into the world—okay, into Oklahoma City, where they had ended up after a childhood spent traveling with their dad, a United Pentecostal Church minister, whose drinking had cost him his latest job. "We had been raised our whole lives living one way," Nathan says, "and when we saw that our dad wasn't living that way anymore, it was kind of like, I don't know, the mama eagle kicking the eaglets out of the nest."

These particular eaglets decided to go to a club in a disused local church. This alone was freaking them out. Then the wet T-shirt contest was announced.

"The first woman to come out was, like, 400 pounds," Nathan says. "We were like, 'All right!'" They moved closer to the stage to get an even better peek. A few moments later, a cracking sound rang out. The boys, who'd heard what goes on in such dens of iniquity, assumed it was gunshots and hit the ground, so they didn't look back to see the balcony collapse behind them. Amazingly, no one was killed, but according to Nathan, 70 people were severely injured.

This is how the Followill boys decided to get into rock'n'roll.

If you've heard of Kings of Leon, it's probably in that "aren't they the guys who look like blink-182 in the 'First Date' video and are somehow involved with the Strokes?" way. Back home in America, Kings of Leon don't have women pooling under their dressing-room windows or threatening to mug journalists for their backstage passes. Their songs do not chirp out of cell phones all across the nation.

But here in the United Kingdom, these things happen. Kings of Leon are big stars in Blighty. In America, the Followills travel with a crew of four; here it's 13, including a masseuse, a personal chef, and a security detail in case they venture out of the tour-bus/hotel-venue bubble. Their debut, *Youth & Young Manhood*, moved 800,000 copies here (opposed to 125,000 in the U.S.), and the just-released follow-up, *Aha Shake Heartbreak*, will likely sell a million.

It's a situation none of them can explain. Except that their success, at first anyway, had something to do with The Story. The Story is this: Caleb, Nathan, and Jared Followill grew up all over the South, splitting their teens between dad on the road and mom in Lebanon, Tennessee (their parents divorced in the early '90s). But when their father was forced out of his profession, the increasingly disillusioned boys decided to reassemble themselves as a drinkin', screwin', smokin' rock band. The Story is in every piece about the band. British journalists have labored to disprove it, but everyone still seems to believe it.

"Over here, they fucking eat up anything Southern," Caleb offers over some salmon backstage. "They liked Kings of Leon, the look, The Story." But spending eight of the last 12 months overseas has erased any marks of rusticity: He's shed his Camaro-driver mustache and



## Kings of Leon



now favors silk sport coats. He compares English bacon to prosciutto, says things like "he has done" instead of "he did," and notes that as a "pescatarian" he eats mostly fish these days. Oh, and he now prefers wine to beer.

"When you spend your whole life in Europe or England or whatever, you learn that luxury is the only thing that's gonna keep your sanity," he says.

I try to push the band on The Story, offering to write a sympathetic account of their great media hoax if, as several U.K. writers have implied, they turn out to be middle-class kids from Nashville instead of the sons of a rambling preacher man. (Journalists have gone so far as to track down friends of their dad and have yet to turn up anything to contradict the band's tale.) At this point, Matthew, the other guys' cousin and Kings' lead guitarist, gets up and leaves the room.

"He won't come back," says Caleb.

"If people stop to think about it, it's not weird," says Jared. "There's so many families in the South that grew up strongly religious. We



During that part of the show where the drummer's head explodes: Kings play Poole, which is apparently in England

wouldn't make up something like that."

"Yeah," says Caleb. "We'd make up something cooler."

Last year, I saw Jet open for Kings of Leon in Washington, D.C., right before the Australian band blew up Stateside. I ask Caleb if it bothers him that Jet achieved the star status he and his bandmates would love to have back home, where he says it's "terrible" to arrive at Nashville International Airport. "No one knows who the hell you are even after you tell 'em," he says. "You live two different lives."

Caleb says he's happy for Jet, but that he was pissed after the Aussies gave an interview in which drummer Chris Cester boasted of blowing the Kings offstage. Jared called the band "two-faced" in an Australian newspaper; Caleb says he confronted Cester when he ran into him in a bar, and one of Cester's bandmates tried to finesse the situation, saying Cester was just being a dick. But Caleb cut him off. "I told him that's the difference between our bands: No one in my band would put himself ahead of the others."

It's probably reading too much into that comment to suggest it

might harken back to the United Pentecostal Church the Followills grew up in. But members of that denomination are distinguished from other evangelicals by their belief in "oneness," i.e., that Jesus Christ alone is God, that there is no traditional Trinity of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Unlike a lot of bands at their level, Kings of Leon spend most of their time together, even live together. Caleb and Nathan share a place in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee (a Nashville suburb); Matthew and Jared live with Jared's mom in nearby Lebanon.

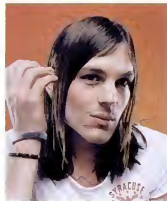
Almost every day when they're home, the Kings gather in Caleb and Nathan's house and try out material in the basement. "We worked really hard on the arrangements," Caleb says. "We're all so far up our own ass to where we have to make sure every part is working." When they gathered in L.A. to record *Aha Shake Heartbreak*, they decided to keep the basement vibe by tracking every song live, with no vocal overdubs. "You have to stay in the same environment to make something work," says Jared. "If you get stoned before class every day, you have to get stoned before the test."

For all its one-take philosophy, though, *Aha Shake Heartbreak* doesn't sound appreciably rawer than its predecessor. The lyrics are another story, in which the Followills reflect on success with the ladies, aggravation with celebrity hangers-on, and belief in the healing abilities of one's "Pistol of Fire." Racy lyrics abound, from the observation in "Taper Jean Girl" that "Cunts watch their bodies" to

In 2001, Nathan and Caleb moved in with their mom in Tennessee, and eventually met a big-deal manager named Ken Levitan (Lyle Lovett, Emmylou Harris). Impressed by their singing ability, Levitan and partner Chris Farren signed the brothers to a publishing deal and introduced them to Angelo Patraglia, a songwriter who helped the boys woodshed. Rungy tunes such as "Trani," about a transvestite prostitute, all delivered in Caleb's weird, mumbly vocals, caught the ear of several labels. Nathan and Caleb got invited to play an RCA label showcase and asked Matthew and Jared to come along. They were soon signed by the same A&R man who brought on the Strokes. "We used to totally hang out with each other because we felt weird being away from other Americans," says Caleb. These days, Caleb and Nathan have dinner together every night, but they often hang out separately on days off.

Now they're working hard on their musical education. Nathan credits Jared for anything hip that the boys listen to. "He was the first one that got to go to a public school," he says. "He had all these friends talking about bands to download, so me and Caleb would be downstairs writing songs and hear cool music coming from Jared's room. That's what people don't realize about us: We didn't really get into cool music before the last four years or so."

That said, they don't need to be introduced to one fan who drops by their dressing room after their second London gig. His name is Mick



Caleb: emulates rock legends, also gets with their daughters



Jared: still gets "involuntary," also still uses the term *involuntary*



Matthew: as a cousin, longs for that telepathy only siblings can share



Nathan: will likely develop interest in Buddhism by the next record

this lament from Caleb on the song "Soft": "I'd pop myself in your body / I'd come into your party / But I'm soft."

"That's never happened," Caleb says quickly when I bring it up. "I'm 18," says Jared. "I'll still get involuntary."

This is all a very long way from an evangelical upbringing. "Mom used to cry," Jared says. "She'd say, 'I can't believe my babies.' Now she understands that we're just trying to be honest. I write the truth."

**I**t's not exactly clear how the Followills went from a childhood they claim was devoid of anything except gospel music to the accomplished alternative rock of *Aha Shake Heartbreak*. While *Youth & Young Manhood* bore a resemblance to blues-inspired touchstones like the Allman Brothers, *Aha* features a couple of songs on which the whole band acts like a rhythm section, evincing the growing influence of late-'70s art-punk bands such as Joy Division and Television.

To hear Nathan tell it, he and Caleb just sort of happened on this sound as they explored the worldly side of Oklahoma City. There are a couple of points that support this version of events. For one, they're all very young. Jared's 18, Matthew's 20, and Caleb is 23. Nathan's the old man at 25. When I first met the band in their dressing room, Matthew and Jared were cooing over the bass line in the Police's "Spirits in the Material World." "I think Sting was 40 before Jared and Matthew were even born," Nathan notes.

Jagger. "He was very complimentary," says Nathan. "Like, he's glad that rock'n'roll was back, two-and-a-half-minute songs, guitars. He said he thought they were dead."

This is the kind of meeting that might cause a less-experienced band's brains to collectively meltdown, but the Followills have some experience with celebrity. For instance, Caleb expects a visit from Kings fan and *The Office* star Ricky Gervais. "If that guy is here tonight I won't talk to any supermodels. I'll just listen to him." That he can set such priorities without irony speaks volumes.

After Jagger departs, I ask Caleb if he lost his shit when he met Jagger. He says something quietly. I beg his pardon. "This is his daughter," he says of the American girl next to him on the couch. Elizabeth Jagger. He whispers something else. I lean in. "That's Chrissie Hynde behind you," he says.

But none of this—the celebrities, the parties, the money—means as much to Kings of Leon as making it back home, where they'll tour with U2 this spring. Right now, their relatives scour Nashville for European magazines featuring the boys, and the Followill brothers would love to spare them the task.

"You definitely want to be big in America," says Jared. "Cause it's not real over here. You come over, you do all these things, and you go home, and it's like you wake up from a dream. I mean, there's a big difference in playing a show for people who speak German and playing a show with 30 of your friends around." ■



Over a barrel:  
Living Things' Eve  
Berlin, Lillian Berlin,  
Bosh Berlin, and  
Corey Becker



Rebels

Living Things have been bounced by two major labels, heckled by Velvet Revolver fans—even shot at in Texas. And they may have made the best album of its kind since *Nevermind*. So why aren't you able to hear it?

By Brian Raftery  
Photographs by  
Michael Lavine

Without

Appause

The aging dirtbags pouring into Manhattan's Roseland Ballroom last May to see Velvet Revolver looked as if they had just broken off from some radio-sponsored Staten Island bar crawl: Faces red with adrenaline, beer-gut-hugging T-shirts stained with sweat, they formed a giant aerial map of ▶

► misplaced aggression. The only way for an opening band to make things go peacefully—aside from, say, dropping 3,500 chloroform-soaked bandannas from the ceiling—was to give the fans a cathartic rock 'n' roll spectacle like no other.

Instead, the crowd got four skinny white dudes, a George W. Bush impersonator, and a giant strap-on dildo.

Thus continued the rapid free fall of Living Things' truly mutant major-label career. For the previous few months, the band had been touring in support of their debut album, *Black Skies in Broad Daylight*. The album had secured early praise (this magazine called the band a Next Big Thing in 2004) and to-kill-for opening slots—everything a successful launch required, it seemed, except for a release date.

Frustrated and fatigued, they took the stage, and depending on who you asked, the next 20-odd minutes—in which lead singer Lillian Berlin would threaten crowd members, set a photo of the president on fire using a pistol-shaped lighter, and parade out dominatrices in Dubya and Donald Rumsfeld masks—were either a hilarious piece of political theater that no one understood or a collection of audience-alienating shock tactics. Either way, by the time it was all over, the future of Living Things (three brothers from St. Louis who weld polemics to power chords) was in doubt. The group had already survived violent attacks, an onstage overdose, numerous arrests, and enough on-the-road brawls to rival the Gallagher brothers; they'd also spent at least \$250,000 of major-label money along the way. Now, sitting in their dressing room, getting chewed out by the head of their label, it looked like they were going to get the ax. No more tour support. No more money. And no more album.

It may have been the best thing that ever happened to them.



"But I thought you said you hated Kiss": Eve finds himself on the receiving end of some brotherly love

**U**pon hearing the story of Living Things—how a band recorded a career-defining album, only to watch it get stalled in record-biz purgatory—one is reminded of Wilco, whose album *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* was rejected by Reprise in 2001, and then resurrected a year later by Nonesuch, another branch of the same corporation. But the two situations couldn't be more different. For one thing, the untended tenderfoots in Living Things have seen more gunplay. And when it comes to scarily determined frontmen, Jeff Tweedy has nothing on Lillian Berlin.

Berlin, 25, is the band's singer, guitarist, and unofficial minister of information. Onstage, he comes across as an intense hybrid of Iggy Pop and Sideshow Bob: mail-slot slender, shrink-wrapped inside jeans and a black leather jacket, with hair that adds a good half foot. But up close he looks more like an early '70s Neil Young, parting his bangs away from his calm eyes, as if they were curtains, when he speaks.

And does he speak—about his band, his upbringing, and his arrests (for trashing the Chicago House of Blues' sound system in 2001 and

disturbing the peace during last summer's Republican National Convention, etc.). Berlin's life is so vivid and strange it could fill a book, and in fact it has: *Post Mortem Blues*, a collection of his teenage diaries, will be released in May.

It's six months after the Roseland debacle, and a few weeks since he and his brothers received official word that their record contract had been canceled. The Berlins live in New York City now—as does Corey Becker, a St. Louis friend who plays guitar with them live—but in a few hours, Lillian will jet off to Italy to scout recording locations. Lately, he hasn't been feeling too comfortable in his own country. "As far as music goes, you're going to see a total chill out," he says. "It's coming from the top: 'Shut the fuck up.' [But] Bush is gonna be in office for another four years, and this is the exact time you can't chill the fuck out."

No one in the uniquely named Berlin clan—not bassist Eve, 22, nor drummer Bosh, 20—has ever chilled the fuck out. It's a wonder they ever survived growing up in the conservative St. Louis suburb of Maryland Heights. "When you enter Missouri, you see the Arch, the

gateway to the Midwest," Lillian says. "And right next to that you see a massive sign that reads JESUS. That pretty much sums up our community. We were the weirdos." And he's not just talking about his brothers: Their mother, Joan Berlin, who was raised Catholic, became an anarchist activist, despite being white, she once tried to join the Black Panthers. Their father, Jeffrey Rothman, is a Jewish carpet salesman who did jail time for trafficking in stolen goods and came out of the closet in 1989. Lillian shrugs often and uses a lot of casual *blah blah* blabs. It's as though everyone grew up sitting around the kitchen table discussing JFK assassination theories and plotting the destruction of the Ku Klux Klan.

"My mom was our idol, our rock star," says Lillian. "She instilled these political ideas of challenging society, getting to the truth, *blah blah* blah." What she didn't instill was a love of music. Lillian's main interest in rock 'n' roll is as a communication device; even when he praises Fugazi, it's more for their discipline than their discography. "MC5 and the Stooges?" he says. "I'm not gonna be some kind of poser. I didn't listen to that shit till five years ago. I would sit with [Hole's] *Live Through This* and just read Courtney Love's lyrics. For me, it felt like she was Sylvia Plath as a rock star. I'm more into the message. I don't even have a CD collection."

Luckily, his father did—or at least he had some old Leadbelly and Bob Dylan albums lying around, which Eve picked up. Lillian, meanwhile, spent his teens pursuing various musical endeavors—one electro-pop outfit, Atrixco, even landed a brief deal with Hollywood Records, though he says it was long after he'd left the group. He also developed a two-year heroin addiction. By the time he cleaned up, his brothers had learned to play in their basement, and the band's formation was part rehab, part therapy, a way to synthesize his obsessions with what he sees as society's ills: malicious corporations, power-mad politicians, and Prozac-pushing doctors. And so in August of 2002—assuming they'd find a bigger audience on the West Coast—Living Things began squatting in Los Angeles, and used their home recordings to score the first of several managers.

The Berlins quickly learned the financial advantages of teaming with DreamWorks: With their hefty advance, Living Things were allowed to head into Albini's studio and work uninterrupted. "They didn't go out boozing and whoring," Albini says. "Other than watching the *Sopranos* DVDs, they were obsessed with the record. Literally, 10 A.M. to 2 A.M." They also got \$110,000 to fly to Prague and make the video for the antiwar anthem "Bombs Below"; on the set, Lillian hooked up with director Floria Sigismondi, 14 years his senior, who gave birth to their daughter in October.

According to Lillian, the problems began when the band turned in their first mixes of the album in winter 2003. DreamWorks, unhappy with some of the songs' rougher edges, demanded that the group work with a new mixer. The band acquiesced, though Lillian says they essentially ignored the label and turned in a slightly altered version of the original. "They didn't even know the fucking difference," he says. The next request would have been harder to fudge: Both the label and the band's management wanted to change the title of the single, "Bombs Below," ostensibly—and perhaps ridiculously—to make it more radio-friendly during media monolith Clear Channel's war-sensitive song ban. The track was eventually released—original title intact—on an EP, *Turn in Your Friends & Neighbors*, but not after some considerable squabbling. "It got real hard-core," Lillian says. "Slowly, the DreamWorks that was very independent at the beginning of our signing was starting to become very corporate."

That wouldn't be a problem for much longer. "DreamWorks was falling apart on the inside," says Jeff Castelaz, who managed Living Things until November 2003, when he left the firm 3AM. "They simply were looking for content that was easy to put in the radio-promotion slingshot and hurl over the walls. They were looking for Powerman 5000 to come back."

When an imploding DreamWorks was sold that same month, the band was cautiously optimistic—until they realized the label had been

"MC5 and the Stooges? I'm not gonna be a poser. I didn't listen to that till five years ago." —Lillian Berlin

**A**s it turned out, the most important show of Living Things' career was also their shortest. Playing at the Viper Room just days after arriving in L.A., the band was kicked off the stage by the club's promoters after just three songs. Lillian thinks it might have been because he was throwing meat at a George Bush blow-up doll. But that was enough to excite DreamWorks Records A&R representative Beth Halper. "The music felt visceral," Halper recalls. "And Lillian, as a front person, really caught my attention. I felt like I was seeing something very under-the-skin."

Within weeks the band had a deal. "We wanted the backing, the mentality, of what we thought was a more independent label," says Lillian. "If you look at the DreamWorks roster, they had Elliott Smith, Rufus Wainwright—they had some eccentric artists." Yet DreamWorks was hardly some mom-and-pop operation, and its biggest rock successes, Alien Ant Farm and Papa Roach, were just the sort of profit-pumpers the Berlin brothers would likely rail against as soulless. In the age of digital distribution and iron-willed indies, why go with the label responsible for Toby Keith?

"As is the case with anybody who gets involved with that system, they think they're smarter than it," says engineer Steve Albini, who recorded *Black Skies in Brood Doylight*, and who warned the band about signing with a major. "I'm not saying they were foolish. You're talking about three brothers who have been consumed by the idea of making this record for a long time. I can understand why they wouldn't want to listen to what anybody who wasn't in their shoes had to tell them."



Happiness is an extremely warm gun: Lillian lights up at a 2004 gig



absorbed by the even larger Interscope-Geffen-A&M, a division of Universal Music Group. To the Berlin brothers, it was like being adopted by a creepy uncle. Worse, *three* creepy uncles.

"We were put onto Geffen," says Lillian. "And the people who run Geffen had the smell of right-wing agendas across the board. We wanted out." Not surprisingly, the feeling was mutual.

**M**any of the people who've worked with Lillian Berlin in the past couple of years make it clear—whether it's through a sigh or a near-audible eye roll—that the guy can drive you bat shit. "Do you ever get the impression that Lillian just won't be happy?" Castelaz asks. "Some people get bent out of shape when anybody says, 'Dude, we need to fix this song. We could get this on the radio if x, y, and z happens.' Some people just aren't attuned to hearing that. And Lillian may just be one of those people."

At least he's consistent. Even when it's pointed out that certain adjustments (altering a song title, dialing down the onstage antagonism) could've smoothed out the process, maybe even won them converts, Lillian won't hear any of it. "We signed up with a record company to come along with us, to help us spread our passion, not for us to come along with them," he says. "If a rock 'n' roll band started acting like middle-aged people who lived in Los Angeles as opposed to a group of twentysomethings from St. Louis..." he trails off, catching his breath. "I just can't imagine people telling Jim Morrison, 'Why don't you keep your dick in your pants?'"

True enough. But when Morrison exposed himself, it was in front of 12,000 fans. Living Things, despite their promise and their unusual hair, couldn't get picked out of a police lineup. They'd be easy enough to write off as baby-band brats if *Black Skies* in *Broad Daylight* wasn't so stunning. A bullshit-free, shiv-sharp union of speedy punk and melodic metal, it's one of the most ferocious straight-ahead rock albums since *Nevermind*. And for a guy who professes to hate "power-pop bullshit," Lillian knows how to make tongue-tripping lyrics like "Exalt the sires / Stamped the sons / It won't take long" sound catchy enough for a protest-rally sing-along.

Onstage, however, Living Things unleash their politics with all the subtlety of an Al Franken-Ann Coulter death match. While opening for Melissa Auf der Maur in Europe last spring, Lillian would do his burning-Bush routine, occasionally tapping his own natural-water supply to put out the flames. ("That was a surprise," says the mono-monickered Casper, the band's tour manager. "I was like, 'That's great, but you're wrapping your own cable.'") "Maybe it's because I'm Canadian, but I didn't find it that shocking," says Auf der Maur. "To me, it's a way of animating an opinion that I don't think is that outrageous."

Living Things' reception in the States was far more incendiary. In Virginia, after throwing a lit newspaper into the crowd while opening for Brides of Destruction, which featured Mötley Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx, Lillian and Eve were told by the tour manager and bodyguard to get packing. Then they were brought to the Brides' tour bus and lectured on the importance of gauging a crowd, as hard-core porn played on the monitors behind Sixx's head. "I never told 'em what not to say," says Sixx. "I said, 'Listen guys, with all due respect, you're gonna light some kid on fire or burn the fucking club down over your political views. Find another way to do it.'" In Washington, D.C., the group returned from a show and found that their van had been ransacked, though apparently nothing was taken. "I was freaking out," says Eve, whose paranoia kicked in. "Like, 'The government's bugging people's cars!'"

Nothing, however, compared to the welcome the band got once

they crossed deep into Bush country. After a relatively benign show in Dallas last summer, Lillian was pistol-whipped, knocked down, and shot at by three men who were enraged by a comment he had made about Iraq; they warned him he'd be killed if he came back. Though Berlin got away with a few busted ribs and a concussion, "it was the most fucked-up experience of my life," he says.

But the band also brought problems on themselves. At CBGB last May, a clearly out-of-it Eve collapsed onstage a minute into the first song, recovered, then dropped again at the end of a blistering set, a victim of what he claims was a bad mix of Xanax and beer. "The [Geffen] representative went and called all these other people," he says. "They called my phone and were screaming, 'Are you on fucking drugs?' They know our history. We've all fucked around. But the last thing I'm gonna do is fuck up my career as a musician and not be able to get onstage and play."

In addition to the occasional mid-show meltdowns—Roseland being the worst example—the brothers have even come to blows. "I've pulled over at a rest stop and said, 'When I come back, you guys have got to stop fighting,'" says Casper. "But if one of them is getting shit from somebody, the next thing you know, the others are there to help take care of it." (Their fiercely protective instincts also keep youngest brother Bosh from talking to the press—a curious policy, considering how up-front they are about their own indulgences.)

By the spring, Living Things had already seen *Black Skies*' release date change two times, and even though it was getting solid reviews—*The Village Voice*'s Chuck Eddy wrote that they could be "the hardest new rock band around"—Stateside fans could only buy it as an import on Amazon.com (DreamWorks had released it in Europe and Asia in May). Frustrated, the band ditched their management and signed

"We didn't want to tour with Velvet Revolver. To us it felt like the Clash opening for Kiss." —Lillian Berlin



The family that plays together ends up beating the crap out of one another on tour together: Bosh, eight, Eve, ten, and Lillian, 13, kick out the jams at home (above); Lillian with his wife, video director Floria Sigismundi, who has shot clips for Marilyn Manson, David Bowie, and Interpol

with QPrime, a high-profile firm that also represents Metallica, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Shania Twain. Then they headed back to the studio to record two new songs, which Geffen had hoped would ease up on the agitprop. Instead, the Berlin brothers came back with "Target Fixation," a song about "religion creating hate," Lillian says. "The chorus had lyrics about killing Christ." Not exactly what the label wanted to hear.

By the time they got to Roseland, Living Things—or, more specifically, the two labels that had bankrolled Living Things—had already spent more than a quarter of a million dollars on an album that still hadn't been released. A second-stage slot on Lollapalooza was going to help build momentum, but that summer tour was canceled. They were, however, able to tour with Velvet Revolver, whose Duff McKagan is a fan. ("To me, they were like a cross between the Dead Boys and the Stooges," he says. "Young, loud, and snotty.") It was a move Lillian fiercely opposed, even though they were being paired with the biggest rock band in the country. "We didn't want to tour with Velvet Revolver," he says. "I don't give a shit if they were selling across the world. To us, it felt like the Clash opening for Kiss."

With that attitude, it's not hard to see why the Manhattan show became chaotic. Shortly after they took the stage, an audience member called Lillian a "nigger," and the set devolved into an incoherent bitch session. By the time "Bush" and "Rumsfeld" came out with a strap-on, the crowd was almost louder than the band. They finished the set, but left the stage to a swell of boos.

Beth Halper, who had also moved to Geffen, says her problem with the show was the band's behavior, not their politics. "If someone heckles you, you gotta deal with it," she says. "I didn't think there was an upside, in New York City of all places, for Lillian to let his guard down and have [the heckling] be more important than playing a great show in front of 3,000 people."

Within minutes of leaving the stage, the band knew they were in trouble. "Our old manager comes back and he looks white as a fucking ghost," says Eve. Among their most vocal critics was Geffen copresident Polly Anthony, who was upset that the band had pulled their stunt while on an opening tour.

Six months later, at least as far as Geffen was concerned, Living Things were dead. The band is convinced it was because of their politics, though there's no real proof. Lillian says he received hateful e-mails from a Universal Music account around the time they were dropped. A Geffen source says that the missives could have been the work of one employee who didn't agree with the band but doesn't represent a company-wide perspective. "I didn't do a poll," says the label insider. "But I'm pretty sure everyone here voted for Kerry."

**L**illian Berlin likes to paint himself as a sort of music-biz rube—he claims to have never heard of Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* troubles until after Living Things were dropped, and says he was unaware that Interscope-Geffen-A&M could lay claim to the songs on *Black Skies* for at least five years. Maybe he's telling the truth; after all, that's the bottom-line bullsh—these guys hire lawyers to deal with. But he's more savvy than he lets on, and that was never more evident than in the weeks after getting the boot. Within days, he was planning a new album, *Letters From Exile*—most of which the band eventually recorded in Italy at the end of last year, using money they had saved by calling in favors. "The sound is way different," Lillian says. "It has a bit of funk in it." The album will



"Now, who am I? Prince! Get it?" Lillian tries to win over the crowd at Manhattan's Roseland

feature horns from the Ohio Players and sidemen who've worked with the Stones, but the most noteworthy guest may be their father, who helped produce it. "It's been weird," says Lillian. "It's kind of a cool, mending-the-relationship sort of thing. He even sings backup with me."

As for *Black Skies*, the band was able to buy it back after putting up \$30,000 (for which they took out a loan) and giving Geffen a cut of future sales. Amazingly, Lillian would like to release both albums through a major (at press time, BMG was interested in their debut), mostly because the exposure is worth the headaches. "Living Things is not signing a deal with an indie label [just to play to] five people," Lillian says. "We want to hit the kid who's 13 years old in St. Louis."

If so, they've got a hard road ahead. Rock'n'roll's most successful rabble-rousers—from the MC5 to Rage Against the Machine—did indeed use major-label cash to fund their world-domination plans, but they were also proven sellers in a far less antagonistic marketplace. If *Toxicity* hadn't sold more than 5 million copies, it's hard to imagine Sony letting System of a Down stay in the building, much less on their label. "The record industry is really dark," Lillian says with a sigh. "The only time corporate America works with rebels is when they can make shitloads of money off them."

Someone could make money off Living Things—if not shitloads, then at least enough for the band to fortify their van—but only if the Berlins don't piss off their providers too much. They've proven that they can stick to their guns, but can they avoid shooting themselves in the foot? ■



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## Beckola

The prince of pop masks samples his past

**Beck**  
Guero  
Interscope



What would a back-to-basics Beck album sound like? It's hard to say—he's spent more than a decade trying on one stylistic mask after another. Before he

was the "Loser" guy, he was a weirdo with an acoustic guitar in the folk underground, and still he rarely looks more in his element than when

he's alone onstage, playing old Hank Williams and Daniel Johnston tunes. So the long-delayed *Guero* is less a return to his essence than a return to his most popular trick: digging up cool grooves and noises from far-flung neighborhoods and throwing a party where the whole city can get down and make out. It's his most varied record, but it also sounds for the first time like he's trying to make a "Beck album"—maybe because lesser artists, from Buck 65 to Har Mar Superstar, have appropri-

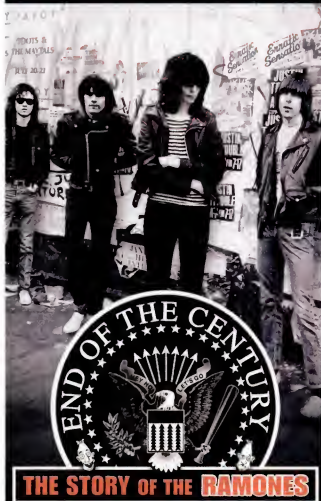
By Douglas Wolk  
Illustration by Ana Bagayan

ated bits of his cast-off styles without grasping what they're part of. Still, it's disconcerting to hear him repeating himself for the first time.

*Guero*'s strongest familial resemblance is to the everything-at-once, hip-hop-inspired production by the Dust Brothers on 1996's *Odelay*; their fingerprints are all over this one, too. (Admittedly, the Brothers' idea of hip-hop beats and Beck's idea of rapping are both somewhere between "Jingling Baby" and "So What'cha Want," but maybe that's not a bad place to be.) The emi-



"It's accurate. It left me disturbed." —Johnny Ramone



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## Reviews

ently air-guitar riff in "E-Pro" that opens the album works exactly the same way as the one in "Devils Haircut" that opened *Odelay*. And if "Qué Onda Guero" is stream-of-consciousness white-kid-rapping and self-deprecating Spanglish chorus had been Beck's follow-up to "Loser" a decade ago, he'd have been dismissed as a one-gimmick novelty. But it's also pretty great in its own right, with its cut-up car-horn hook and snatches of bilingual conversation going on in the background. Notable English phrases that pop out of the murk: "James Joyce," "new Yanni cassette," "I'm taking a ceramics class."

Too much of Guero, though, uses its bazonkadonkers sample library and country-blues harmonica and samba chords and scritch scratches and electro squiggles to cover up for half-finished songs or for Beck's resistance to revealing too much. His voice has never been so slurry, or buried so deep in the mix; the summery-sounding "Girl" may be a murder ballad in disguise, if the chorus' blur of syllables is actually "I know I'm gonna make her die / Take her where her soul belongs." "Black Tambourine" is fabulous as pure funk: a rhythm that bypasses the brain and goes straight to the hips, and a two-chord guitar solo that jackknifes out of the mix. Sadly, there's not much to it beyond that—once you've

heard the first line of the melody, you've heard the whole thing. The robotic poppin'-and-breakin' anthem "Hell Yes" is essentially "Where It's At," recast as an exasperated dismissal of the pop-star machinery: "Perfunctory idols rewriting their Bibles...Fax-machine anthems, get your damn hands up."

Beck dims the lights further for the album's last three songs, all of which are about death, and revisits the other part of his roots: the primal force of early blues that he explored on 1994's *One Foot in the Grave*. "Farewell Ride" is an homage to Charley Patton, a shuddery forced march with Beck groaning about "two white horses in a line" and avoiding a rhyme for "mission bells" so he doesn't invoke hell. "Rental Car" updates the traditional death-ride scenario—this time the road to the reaper is the interstate out of L.A., and instead of a slide guitar there are a few skull-metal riffs and a space-age-bachelor-pad chorale. And "Emergency Exit" is a chain gang chant about slow death as an approach to "a Nazarene." Listen to the rest of *Guero* after these have ended, and blues-inspired images of death and the afterlife pop out of all the other songs. That might be Beck's point: displaying the grinning skull behind every goofy facade he's worn to show what gives each its shape. **Grade: B**

## I'll Be My Mirror

Re-creating Beck's Back Pages  
By Douglas Wolk



### Odelay

(Geffen, 1996) The turntables and unlikely samples that stack into berserk funk belong to the Dust Brothers, but the microphone is all Beck's—perched on top of an L.A. junkyard, free-associating, rapping, yodeling stoned bilingual country songs and shouting out Sergio Valente.



### Midnite Vultures

(Geffen, 1999) Beck fell in love with the R&B love-man pose first, then tried to pour his loopy spiels into bright purple flashdance ass-pants. He climaxes with the Smooove B-licious "Debra," in which he gets freaky with whomever happens to be at hand and her sister.



### One Foot in the Grave

(K, 1994) A galumphing, crumpled-up folk-blues album made with not much more than tin cans and string. It's an atonal mess in places, raw and trippy most of the time, and a singer/songwriter album like no other.



### Sea Change

(Geffen/Interscope, 2002) In which our hero's girl dumps him, and he takes off the Day-Glo suit, hangs out in a corner, existentially bummed, and croons slowly about mortality and loss. Lucky thing the psychedelic string section happened to stop by.

PARENTAL  
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EXPLICIT CONTENT



Queens of the Stone Age find an excellent setting for some serious thinking

## Queens of the Stone Age Lullabies to Paralyze

Interscope



Josh Homme, all alone, explores his artistic side

Josh Homme is probably the only metal god who looks at home in a polo shirt. That's not an irrelevant observation: From the moment he jumped from "stoner rock" progenitors Kyuss into Queens of the Stone Age (see the bands' 1997 self-titled split EP), it was clear he wanted to mess with the heavy-rock gospel, from the Queens' homophobic-baiting name to his choir-boy voice to his taste for melody and odd textures. God bless him. And yes, it's all about him: On *Lullabies*, not one band member remains from 2002's monster-truckin' *Songs for the Deaf*—not even high school bud Nick Oliveri, reportedly booted for his Sid Vicious complex—but the approach hasn't changed at all.

Well, maybe a little. Hot new drummer Joey Castillo can't quite match the heaving of moonlighter Dave Grohl, and no Oliveri means no hoary death-metal vogues (like Rated R's "Tension Head"). It's not

like the latter were any great achievements, but they're the sort of half-serious forefinger-and-pinkie salutes mostly missing from *Lullabies*, an eclectic, rippin' record whose only shortcoming is its commitment to artistic quality.

Don't get me wrong; more hard-rock albums should open with dark, Leonard Cohen-style ballads like "Lullaby" and end with tuneful chuggers like "Long Slow Goodbye," which sounds as if it could've been penned by Homme's pal Polly Harvey, with help from the late George Harrison. The sexy glam stomps, clipped speed-riffs, and sludgy space-jams are still in effect and plenty hot. "Medication" is classic Queens drug-metal, "Everybody Knows That You're Insane" is headbanging Pink Floyd, and "Someone's in the Wolf" is a soaring robo-rock epic, with echo falsetto vocals and guitars ratcheting upward like they're climbing an M.C. Escher stairway.

But be forewarned, *Lullabies* is the Queens' "mature" album. Should hard rock be mature? I dunno. My advice to Homme: Ask Metallica's shrink—but be prepared to pay for an answer.

WILL HERMES

Grade: B

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## Reviews

### 50 Cent The Massacre Interscope



The biggest rapper on earth wonders which world is his

Back in 2003, when 50 Cent was first strong-arming record sales, his major-label debut, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, introduced us to his grimy life story, revealing the sensitive side of a thug with a pen-

chant for catchy club bangers. But *The Massacre*, Fiddy's sophomore effort, is a far more calculated proposition. Now he's carving out alternate 50s for every demographic and passing them out like campaign bribes. He's seen the world, his thug and P.I.M.P. personas have softened, but leaving the 'hood behind means he's not sure which street to move onto.

Though "Disco Inferno" "leaked" early to radio, the Scott Storch-produced "Candy Shop" (featuring G Unit's R&B diva, Olivia) sets the tone—Lil' Kim's "Magic Stick" minus the petrol push. 50 tries to weave a sexual motif throughout the album, with equal portions of pimpin', teasing, and loving—yes, loving. Not that he's far from calling

women bitches and ho's; he's just nailing down a key constituency. But he's much more comfortable, and engaged, when he's igniting beef. The Needlz-produced "Piggy Bank" jabs at the usual suspects, Ja Rule and Shyne, but adds newly-weds Nas and Kelis to the roster of the most hated, along with Jadakiss and Fat Joe. To Joey Crack, he blasts, "You thought 'Lean Back' was big in the club / My [album] did 11 mil, your [album] was a dud." Clever wordplay and prudent track selection stand out as business moves over artistic endeavors.

While big-ticket means always keeping an eye on the marketing, for 50 it has become a religion. There's the inventive "Baltimore Love Thing," in which he imagines himself as the heroin that a female addict is attempting to kick. But that's about it for originality. There's the lulling "Ryder Music" and the dark and eerie thug anthem "I'm Supposed to Die Tonight," featuring Eminem; he and Eminem partner again on the uncharacteristically lighthearted "Gatman and Robbin'." But most surprising is the praise-God track, "God Gave Me My Style," where 50 even shouts out two Southern TV evangelists, Creflo Dollar and



Competing with air and guns for global omnipresence: 50 Cent

T.D. Jakes, along with the Queens-based Rev. Dr. Floyd Flake. He's already rich, but this time around he's tryin' too hard to be everything to everybody. **LYNNE d JOHNSON**  
**Grade: B-**

## The Decemberists

Picaresque

Kill Rock Stars



An indie-rocker who never leaves home without his library card

What's a young man to do with his English major? Write lines like "There are angels in your angles / There's a low moon caught in your tangles," that's what. At Indie Rock U., where the Shins' James Mercer is class president and Conor Oberst heads

up the Young Democrats, Decemberists leader Colin Meloy is the kid in the drama department puzzling over how to work all the members of the Arcade Fire into a production of *Sweeney Todd*. The

sharp-voiced Portland punk-folk troubadour's music is rife with tales of Victorian seafarers and warlike ghosts. Following 2003's art-film *Her Majesty*, the Decemberists released a 2004 EP titled *The Tain*, an 18-minute retelling of the Irish epic "Cattle Raid of Cooley."

Amid the swashbuckling on his band's third album, *Picaresque*, we get an emo Headless Horseman, "Eli, the Barrow Boy," and "The Mariner's Revenge Song," in which a wronged stepson confronts his pirate stepdad inside the belly of a whale: "Then you disappeared / Your gambling arrears / The only thing you left behind." If the desperate warble and literary mash-ups invite comparisons to Neutral Milk Hotel, the jumpy "Sixteen Military Wives" bounces into New Pornographers territory, as Meloy mock gloats, "America can't say no / And America does / If America says / It's so / It's so."

Like his favorite artist, the French painter Balthus, Meloy obsesses over purity and corruption, casting himself as the debaser



"This Kill Rock Stars PE requirement is a real pain": the Decemberists

of one "sweet, untouched Miranda" in "We Both Go Down Together." Though he rarely cracks a smile, he finds creativity in defeat. His portrait of the artist as a young bench-rider, "The Sporting Life," makes an anthem of game-day shame. Flattened on the soccer field, with guitars swirling like stars and

drums pounding a "Lust for Life" pep talk, Meloy wrings poetry from his dad's disappointment: "My father had had such hopes / For a son who would take the ropes." Thankfully, he chose the purity of the pen instead.

**LAURA SINAGRA**  
**Grade: B+**

ALICIA ROSE/COURTESY KILL ROCK STARS

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Secret gardener: Tori Amos

## Tori Amos The Beekeeper

Epic



**Finding herself, losing her way**

In 1994, the bummed, skate-punk mail-rat of Green Day's *Dookie* and the ethereal anti-Cornflake Girl of Tori Amos' *Under the Pink* entered the pop mainstream. A decade later, Green Day are still fighting that kid's battle, railing against the authority figures keeping him down. But Amos, once one of rock's great universalizing storytellers, has chosen to lead her fans down the path of her own epic narcissism. The post-9/11 treatise *Scarlet's Walk* was a personalized journey across America, but *The Beekeeper* provides only rough coordinates for a journey through Amos' increasingly unreadable psyche—a trip into the most devoted Amosian scholar

would dare navigate, even with a guidebook as obsessively detailed as her recent bio, *Piece by Piece*.

While Amos has yet to run out of tales about strange little girls, none of these 19 tracks comes close to capturing the clarity of *Pink*'s "God" or the deep creepiness of her Eminem cover, "97 Bonnie & Clyde." She continues to invoke imagery that's beautiful ("Flaxen hair blowing in the breeze / It is time for the geese to head south") and baffling ("How was I to know / The pirates have come / Between Rebecca's / Beneath your firmaments"). But her musical palette—from the gentle adult contemporary shuffle of "Sweet the Sting" to the lame boogie-woogie of "Hoochie Woman"—is paradoxically flat. Brief vocal contributions from the London Community Gospel Choir and Irish singer/songwriter Damien Rice let some air into the sonic vacuum, but only a few songs (the swirling "Sleeps With Butterflies" and the

gorgeously litting "Parasol") flirt with her previous brilliance.

Green Day's unambiguous *American Idiot* featured a "Jesus of Suburbia," and in her baroque way Amos offers us the "Barons of Suburbia." It's unclear whether they stole her faith in government or her inner flame. Perhaps they made off with her songwriting mojo, too.

CARYN GANZ

Grade: C

## Jack Johnson In Between Dreams

Brushfire



**A Jimmy Buffett for dispossessed Phish fans**

Jack Johnson has it figured out. The Hawaiian native is a surfer, a filmmaker, and he makes bank as a writer and singer of ultralight acoustic rock songs. He's the hotter, chillier version of that barefoot sociology

major you always saw picking "No Woman, No Cry" on a Martin guitar in front of the dorms, flashing a "Who, me?" smile at passing cuties. Judging from the estrogen spike when he walked onstage before 25,000 at last year's Austin City Limits Music Festival, he's also the sort of guy ring-toed ladies would love to drink beer with while watching *Friends* DVDs. And going by the platinum sales of 2003's *On and On*, he has also found a lucrative sweet spot between singer/songwriter navel-gazing and jam-band expansiveness that barely

registers enough with indie-rock fans to elicit vague condescension.

*Dreams* doesn't build much on the Buffett ease and placeless island rhythms of Johnson's previous albums, but hey, ambition is for the ambitious; why fix what's still spiking the estrogen? Johnson's not quite soulful enough to sell the single "Sitting, Waiting, Wishing" as a tale of romantic woe, but his earnestness does all right by it, and all right is plenty good. "Staple It Together" breaks out the polyrhythms, while "Breakdown" remakes his universal-honky guest spot on Handsome Boy Modeling School's *White People* in gentle waves of strum. "The wisdom's in the trees, not the glass windows," he sings. "You can't stop wishing if you don't let go." Hey, man, whatever works. JOE GROSS

Grade: D+

## Out Hud Let Us Never Speak of It Again

Kranky



**Arty dark-lit dance-pop brilliance**

Tom Tom Club's heavily sampled '80s epic "Genius of Love" is one of pop music's chipriest songs, but it was written about the compulsive cocaine sniffing of singer Tina Weymouth's ex-boyfriend—the

troubled trust behind its gum-chewing melody. So when Out Hud vocalists Phyllis Forbes and Molly Schnick thread a version of the song's cotton-candy rap—albeit a little woozier on the pitch—into Out Hud's experimental dance pop, it also feels like they're casting a strobe light on some undefined darkness. The irony in Forbes' and Schnick's breathy singing gives simple lyrical dares like "Tread on me / Test me" an added tension. When the band gets into its elastic, space-exploration disco funk, even cheeky titles like "2005: A Face Odyssey" and "Dear Mr. Bush, There Are Over 100 Words for Shit and Only 1 for Music. Fuck You, Out Hud" don't disguise their distress.

Ramping up the dub-punk med-



More stoked than you: Jack Johnson

# Playlist

The songs you need to know—  
and the ones that must be stopped



## Play

- 01 **Hot Hot Heat, "Goodnight, Goodnight"** (Sire/Reprise) Steve Bays is hellia pissed at his ex-girlfriend—he's lost it, he's dangerous, he's even... "given up on social niceties." No forwarded mail for you, baby. Luckily, his bros stack up sharp XTC riffs, whirly Attractions keyboards, and a taut Strokes beat into a neat little heart-shaped box where he can store his broken dreams.
- 02 **Martha Wainwright, "B.M.F.A."** (Rounder) If you really want to see feathers fly, this Canadian neo-folkie goes ballistic where the aforementioned Canadian new-wave boys are merely passive-aggressive. She strums and swears herself blue, ripping the "bloody motherfucking asshole" in her life a whole mess of new ones.
- 03 **Gym Class Heroes, "Taxi Driver"** (Fueled by Ramen) Multiracial, upstate New York rap crew flips enough rock-band-name rhymes to choke a sidestage at Coachella. Sad-sack, pill-popping MC Travis McCoy takes a cutie for a ride in his death cab, and before you know it, his chemical romance is over and there's a trail of dead at the drive-in.

## Download

- 04 **Jin, "Tsunami Response"** (alljin.com) For some reason, New York's "blazing hip-hop and R&B" outlet, Hot 97, decided it would be edgy and amusing to air a race-baiting parody of "We Are the World" that mocked the victims of the tsunami disaster. Jin's reply is a blunt, blistering freestyle smackdown of the parties responsible—morning-show hack Miss Jones and her crew, all of whom will hopefully be unemployed by the time you read this.
- 05 **Ciara feat. M.I.A., "Goodies (Richard X Remix)"** Bootleg mash-up master X turns the beat of Ciara's R&B original into electro banger, while M.I.A. declares "Hoochie is so way over" before sealing it by taunting, "There ain't no nookie for you here."

## Trash

- 06 **Gwen Stefani feat. Eve, "Rich Girl"** (Interscope) When this song was called "If I Were a Rich Man" (from *Fiddler on the Roof*), it was not only grammatically correct, but also sung by a poor Jewish milkman. This version is sung by a spoiled pop diva who's already rich. If we were rich, we'd pay Stefani to give us a fucking break.

Roger Ebert says, "Imagine a film in which Jackie Chan and Buster Keaton meet Quentin Tarantino and Bugs Bunny."



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## Reviews



About as  
turban as  
we're gonna  
get: Out Hud

### Various Artists

Run the Road

Vibe



That  
London  
rap called  
"grime" has  
a coming-of-  
age party.

If hip-hop is all about attitude (it's not, but humor me a minute), London may well be the most hip-hop place on earth. Since the Streets' Mike Skinner brought the unreconstructed, unapologetic Englishness of

2002's *Original Pirate Material*, the rambunctious "grime" sound—parts dancehall, early jungle, garage, and gangsta rap—of guys like Dizzee Rascal and Wiley has made Skinner's audacious debut seem pretty tentative. If American MCs often project the nonchalant, even bored menace of born winners, these Brits still sound hungry, giving their fairly standard topics—themselves, their crews, the greatness of both—thrilling heft and depth.

itations on 2002's all-instrumental *S.T.R.E.E.T.D.A.D.*, while finding their voices for the first time, these Brooklynites seem comfier mining acid trax and the low-end rumbles of Paradise Garage-era art disco. Keeping a foothold in the sweaty area between basement shows and dance clubs, they take past styles and work out ten-minute-long ruminations with wispy cello, gated drum smacks, and vintage synths. But they're better at evoking turbulence than talking about it—efforts to cop '80s-pop vocals are overshadowed by the cascade and rumble of the instrumental long-players. So when bassist Tyler Pope (who, like half the band, is also in funk-punkers !!!) screws the bass line from "Genius of Love" into glitches and guitars on "The Stoked American," it's an appliqué of new ideas—like sampling, not stealing—finding something true in the tumult beneath the tweets.

JULIANNE SHEPHERD  
Grade: A-



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Now we have this absolutely rousing compilation—the first U.S. grime collection, and one of a surprisingly few available in England—that suggests a teeming underground fed by clubs, pirate radio, and white-label vinyl that's vibrant like early rave, only with loved-up disco bonhomie replaced by rap's gotta-get-mine drive. *Run the Road* especially shows the style's multifaceted musicality, from the buffed '80s R&B of Roll Deep's "Let It Out" to the playful PlayStation pings and pops of Ears' "Happy Dayz" to Jammer's posse cut "Destruction VIP," which sounds like El-P remixing Britney's "Toxic." On top of these rhythm beds, more than two dozen MCs flex with an odd, affecting mixture of above-it-all cool and you-only-get-one-shot freneticism that's summed up by the disc's killer cut, "Cha-Ching (Cheque 1, 2 Remix)," by squeaky-voiced, 18-year-old Lady Sovereign: "Best thing since sliced bread or Eminem / Feminem? / Naw, I'm Miss Sovereign, yeah / 'That girl thinks



Lady Sovereign rocks the mic, gets home by 11 P.M.

she's so big" / Now, hold on, I'm only five-foot-one."

Grime may have spun off genuine (British) stars in Dizzee and Wiley, as well as uncle Skinner, but when all three appear on *Run*, they feel like part of the gang. It's the best kind of posse album—everyone's in the same crew, adding their voice to the shared sound.

MICHAELANGELO MATOS

Grade: A-

## Daft Punk Human After All Virgin Fischerpooner Odyssey Capitol



Dance music stars search for another spin

What do you do when the stardust fades? For electronic dance music, that oft-posed question doesn't seem exactly relevant—the 21st

century can't seem to hawk a car without it, after all. But for groups that actually embodied a pop moment, career-sinking jitters can set in. Ten years after they emerged as French house music's paterfamilias, Daft Punk represent an idealized time for fans who've since traded in pills for prams. And they spend a decent chunk of their first album in four years taking half-hearted stabs at their former glories.

Most notably, "Television Rules the Nation" siphons off the compressed, tooth-rattling bass from brilliant singles like "Da Funk," and the title track riffs off old-school filter-house like "Musique," layering



**THE FIERY FURNACES, EP** (Rough Trade) Play the latest CD by these Brooklyn avant-pop siblings and you'll get a hidden message: *Hey Ma, we did our English homework!* Filled with tricky alliteration, Joycean wordplay, and "I can do my scales all the way up to high C" piano arpeggios, this collection of B-sides and rarities turns neo-Sgt. Pepper eclecticism into full-blown bohemian rhapsody. Both experimental and playful, Matthew Friedberger makes his guitar squawk like a *Peanuts* teacher, and when sister Eleanor sings *da-da* like it's Dada, there's only one thing left to say: Yazoo. Whoop, whoop. Dingdong.

MELISSA MAERZ Grade: A-

"Relentless thrash metal"  
- *Rolling Stone*

"Iron Maiden for the  
Grand Theft Auto generation"  
- *SPIN*

"The War Within... equally  
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Master Of Puppets was to  
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- *GUITAR*

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## Reviews

And you thought  
the future was  
going to be more  
comfortable:  
Daft Punk.



distorted guitar riffs and squelched vocals for a jacked-up bounce. Yet, where 2001's *Discovery* coyly gene-spliced cock rock and New York garage, *Human* merely cuts and pastes: On the lead single, "Robot Rock," they noisily helix the synth riff from Breakwater's 1980 funk jam "Release the Beast" and call it a day.

Fischerspooner have a much tougher job for their second record. As the face of New York's '80s-plifering electroclash scene (circa 2003), they're trying to rise above a genre that's lapsed into a hipster punch line. You sense the dilemma in songs like "Wednesday," on which frontman Casey Spooner sings, "I feel like I'm still there," as if he's stuck in an existential time warp. But Fischerspooner have actually

worked on the problem, experimenting with prog rock and punk—check the psychedelic flourishes on their cover of the Boredoms' "Circle"—and beefing up their songwriting with the help of Linda Perry, French house producer/Madonna muse Mirwais, and, mind-bogglingly, the late writer/intellectual Susan Sontag. "Everything to Gain" taps the stuttering keyboard intro to "Baba O'Riley" before spiraling off into an epic rock-opera fantasy, and the poppy "All We Are" plays off P.L.U.R. bromides with a wink and a sigh. Infusing their music with real personality and humor, sexiness and humility, they've neatly transcended the air-quote graveyard.

ADRIENNE D'AY

Grades: Daft Punk, C-;  
Fischerspooner, B+

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## The Soundtrack of Our Lives Origin Vol. 1

Republic/Universal



Retro-rockers file their record collection

"Welcome to the future," frontman Ebbot Lundberg bel-lows dubiously on "Bigtime," one of a dozen hard-driving garage-rock tunes on *Soundtrack of Our Lives*' fourth album. Somebody call Will Smith's agent: Turns out the future will not consist of mega-lomaniacal robots and ninth-wave trip-hop records, but a bear-size Swedish Beatles nut in a caftan who is tailor-made for a second career hosting *Rock's Greatest Beards* on VH1 Classic.

Lundberg and his bandmates—they're less memorable, more like guys you'd see stalking the Hard Rock Hotel—are not unaware of the retro whiff that their music carries. The band's first three albums were big-hearted mash notes to a vintage record store of the mind. Yet they never succumbed to the collector-geek solipsism that bogs down most throw-back idealists;

the title of 2001's excellent *Behind the Music* nodded to both the VH1 show and the idea that something—a wry sense of humor, showmanship, vulnerability—was going on beyond the pastiche.

That feeling is largely missing from *Origin Vol. 1*, which offers modest formal thrills without much depth beneath its glimmering surfaces. Each tune is accomplished enough to set you windmilling in front of the mirror: Opener "Believe I've Found" pivots on a great spy-flick riff; drummer Fredrik Sandsten motors "Transcendental Suicide" with a series of endless tom rolls; "Lone Summer Dream" has a trippy incense-and-peppermints breakdown. But sit down with the songs and they never reveal more than allusions to other songs. "We're on our way to paradise," Lundberg sings over slashing Pete Townshend power chords at one point, and yet we never get there because there's no there—just fond remembrances of a future long since past.

MIKAEL WOOD

Grade: C+

See also: *Oasis, Be Here Now* (Epic)



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# Breakdown

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**High on Fire**  
*Blessed Black Wings*  
Relapse



California post-stoner metal trio turn to engineer Steve Albini, get cleaned up for dinner, then gorge themselves anyway. High on Fire's third album is relentless, both sonically and technically, and Matt Pike's sinister howl is bested only by his guitar brutality, which nods to Celtic Frost ("To Cross the Bridge") as well as punk ("Anointing of Seer"). **B+**

**Sole**  
*Live From Rome*  
Anticon



Blitting Noam Chomsky. Reading Harper's. Saving the whales. Is there anything left for an indie MC to rap that'll sound obscure or oppositional? Sole won't rest until he's exhausted every option. And while he may never amount to more than Aesop Rock-minus, there's some black magic lurking between his bitter introspection and his myriad producers' "goth-hop" illuminations. **B**

**Prefuse 73**  
*Surrounded by Silence*  
Warp



Avant hip-hop producer Scott Herren has the good collaborative instincts of Handsome Boy Modeling School, but none of their seedy, crowd-pleasing shtick. His best: the elegantly broken beats and warm, butter-soft melodies of "Pagina Dos" and the razor-concealing comfort sounds of "Hideyface," with backpacker wet-dream team El-P and Ghostface. **B**

**Vic Chesnut**  
*Ghetto Bells*  
New West



Never the sunniest of characters, of "Sad Peter Pan" really sounds ass-out on this one. His midwest folk rock is dourly impenetrable, and its misanthropy is rarely lightened with the tender ironies or crooked wit of his best songs. "Fortnight" is a slow, gorgeous, let's-work-it-out dream sequence, if you're willing to wade through the murk (which has never been thicker). **C-**

**Mu**  
*Out of Breach (Manchester's Revenge)*  
Output Recordings



Recalling big beat's whoopee cushion whomp and fronted by a wooting, screaming, chicken-impersonating Japanese woman, this duo shakes up house music's shiny, tasteful austerity with screwball angst ("Like a Little Bitch") and wry inanity ("Paris Hilton"). Definitely not as funny or crazy as they think they are, but probably more than they need to be. **B**

**A Frames**  
*Black Forest*  
Sub Pop



Stark and throbbing Seattle trio turn static into clang, drums into drones, and dream apophenias about death and quantum mechanics in—surprise, surprise—harmonies that barely register above a monotone. But tracks like the "Black Forest" trilogy are packed with sparse, whining, and danceable noise-rock refinements that any robot would be proud to blurt. **B**

**Brendan Benson**  
*Alternative to Love*  
V2



If they gave an SAT for alt-rock songwriting, Benson would nail the math and choke on the verbal. He's great with the hook-melody algebra, not so hot on figuring what to say beyond "Love, blah, blah, blah, la, la, la." "Pledge of Allegiance" pleasantly adds Tijuana brass to a Pulp melody, but the deep, meaningful alienation stuff never kicks in. **B-**

**Pigeon John**  
*Pigeon John Sings the Blues!*  
Basement



Rap's Randy Newman, Pigeon John approaches his outsider status with cabaret whimsy. He finds love with women, sort of (on "She Cooks Me Oatmeal") and the Elliott Smith-meets-Mobb Deep shambles "Nothing Without You"). But the girl he really can't win over is hip-hop. He'll live, though: "Don't mind being myself / Even if it holds me from possible wealth." **B+**

**Airborn Audio**  
*Good Fortune*  
Ninja Tune



Antipop Consortium were underground hip-hop's most beloved eggheads, spitting abstract digressions over E. Biaz's loopy beats. And since their split, lead MC Beans has released a few virtuoso nuto solo records. But his partners' debut is a straight snore—their quirky, low-key rhymes are deadened by unfornished beats and glitches too limp to even qualify as beats. **C**

**Ana Da Silva**  
*The Lighthouse*  
Chicks on Speed



While trendy freak-folk types drop records that sound like a schizophrenic infant covering Leonard Cohen in a disused toolshed, Da Silva (a founding member of the Raincoats) dreams up lovely, lulling, licktock keyboard backdrops (with touches of guitar and strings) for her exquisite chorales about disco balls and the cold wind. Utterly seductive. **A-**

**Ffa Coffi Pawb**  
*Am Byth*  
Empyrean



Back in the '80s, Super Furry Animals (and friends) were listening to a lot of Jesus and Mary Chain and Velvet Underground and reproducing those noise-rock touchstones with lyrics in their native Welsh. And doing it pretty well, judging by these '86-'92 tracks, which are rife with spacey, happy drone-rock, hazy jams, and ungodly consonant combos. **B+**

**Neva Dinova**  
*The Hate Yourself Change*  
Crunk!



Singer/guitarist/Conor Oberst-fan Jake Bellows radios in his vocals from some desolate space station of the soul (and/or Omaha) and takes a real long time moving his hand from the top string to the bottom one, giving him that most more room to remind us of all the ways he's tried and been tried by the many black hearts who couldn't care less. **B-**

# Reissues

More proof it was all better before you were born By Will Hermes

The revolution will be for the most part shirtless: the MC5



**MC5, *Are You Ready to Testify?*** The Live Bootleg Anthology (Sanctuary) While the ace documentary *MC5: A True Testimonial* remains stuck in legal limbo, here's consolation: three live CDs from '68 and '70, plus liner notes outlining the ten-point program of former band affiliates the White Panther Party ("Free media, free technology, free education, free health care...everything free!"). Sound quality sorta sucks, but it isn't much worse than the band's live classic, *Kick Out the Jams*. Punk-funk note: The sick James Brown medley proves these Detroit freaks did groove-spectacle as well as any of their Motown brothers, offspring Jack White included.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE



**Various artists, *The Complete Motown Singles Vol. 1: 1959-1961*** (hip-oselect.com) A holy-shit holy grail presenting hits (the Marvelettes' "Please Mr. Postman," the Miracles' "Shop Around") alongside a mountain of mighta-beens, including shameless Ray Charles cops, gospel-choir stompers, raw blues, and ghetto novelties coined before the Motown Sound became an archetype of America's post-racial dreams (an oft-overlooked era that renders a mass of incredible music). But if you spring for this "only available through the website" fetish object—six CDs in a fat book, plus a newly minted 45 of Barrett Strong's "Money (That's What I Want)"—then you'll want all 12 volumes (going right up until '72). When your granddad says Usher can't touch Smokey, this is what he's on about.



**Yo La Tengo, *Prisoners of Love*** (Matador) Yo La get called a "critics' band" because: (1) Frontman Ira Kaplan was once a rock critic, (2) their covers range from the Beach Boys to Sun Ra and virtually never suck, (3) Kaplan is a guitar-nerd god who surfs feedback like Kelly Slater, and (4) his cuddly drummer/wife Georgina Hubley and bassist/pal James McNew make the band seem like a cooler version of the high school chess club. In fact, this chummy best-of-plus-rarities set—full of sweet, catchy, noisy pop—argues that they're actually a "normal people's band."



**King Crimson, *The 21st Century Guide to King Crimson Volume One: 1969-1974*** (Discipline Global Mobile) The heaviest of the prog-rock wonks—defined by Robert Fripp's imploding guitar leads—ranged from faux-jazz annoying to thunderously rad and counted overachievers, from Trey Anastasio to Trent Reznor, as fans. This definitive overview, half studio/half live, mercifully stops before Adrian Belew came with the David Byrne impersonations in the '80s. Nowadays, we have the Arcade Fire dude for that.

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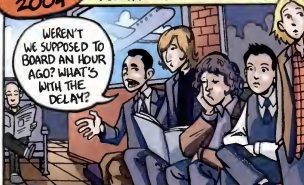
# real-life rock tales

This month: The Killers encounter a real killer

As told to Sarah Lewitinn by Brandon Flowers Illustration by Mike Norton

DECEMBER 2004

WE WERE WAITING FOR A FLIGHT AT PERTH AIRPORT IN AUSTRALIA.



WEREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO BOARD AN HOUR AGO? WHAT'S WITH THE DELAY?



I HEAR THERE'S GOING TO BE A KILLER ONBOARD!

YA SEEN THE KILLER, MATE?

WOW, EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT US!



WE THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO GET SPECIAL CELEBRITY TREATMENT, BUT THEN...

BOARDING AREA



THEY WERE TRANSPORTING A NOTORIOUS SERIAL KILLER ON OUR PLANE!

WOW, HANNIBAL LECTER GETS HIS OWN ROOM BACK THERE.

LET'S GO TO THE BATHROOM AND CHECK HIM OUT.



WHAT IF HE ESCAPES AND CUTS YOUR PRETTY FACE OFF?

STOP TRYING TO SCARE ME, ROADIE!

STEP AWAY, GENTLEMEN.



SOMETHING ABOUT THE FLIGHT FELT DOOMED.

ONE OF THE TIRES EXPLODED DURING TAKEOFF!

THE PILOT DUMPED SOME FUEL SO WE WOULDN'T EXPLODE.

THIS IS THE CAPTAIN SPEAKING... DON'T BE ALARMED, BUT THERE WILL BE FIRE TRUCKS AND AMBULANCES ON THE GROUND WHEN WE LAND.

WHAT IF WE CRASH AND THE SERIAL KILLER ESCAPES AND STEALS OUR SUITS?

WAAAH!



I LOVE YOU, DAVE!

I LOVE YOU TOO, MAN!



LUCKILY, THE PLANE LANDED WITHOUT A HITCH. WE WERE JUST THRILLED TO BE ALIVE.

YAAAY!



DAVE, ABOUT WHAT I SAID BACK THERE...

UH, I THINK YOU'VE GOT A BIGGER PROBLEM.

THE END!



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